三国志 ④

乱世の奸雄

横山光輝

希望コミックス 20

SANGOKUSHI

4

A VILLANOUS HERO IN THE AGE OF CHAOS

CAO CAO MENGDE

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU

SANGOKUSHI (ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志（さんごくし）

VOLUME 04
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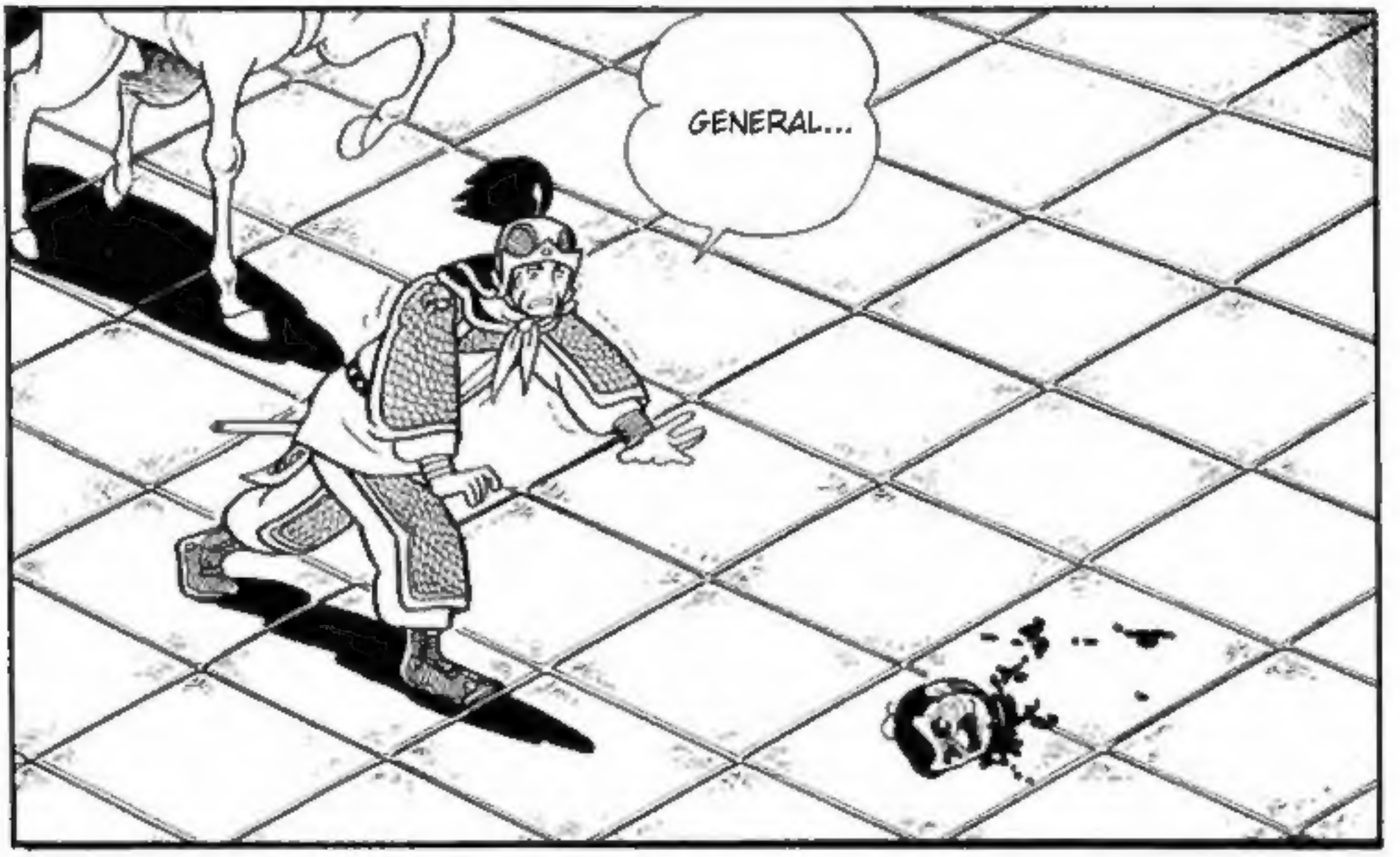
DONGZHUO OF LINGZHOU



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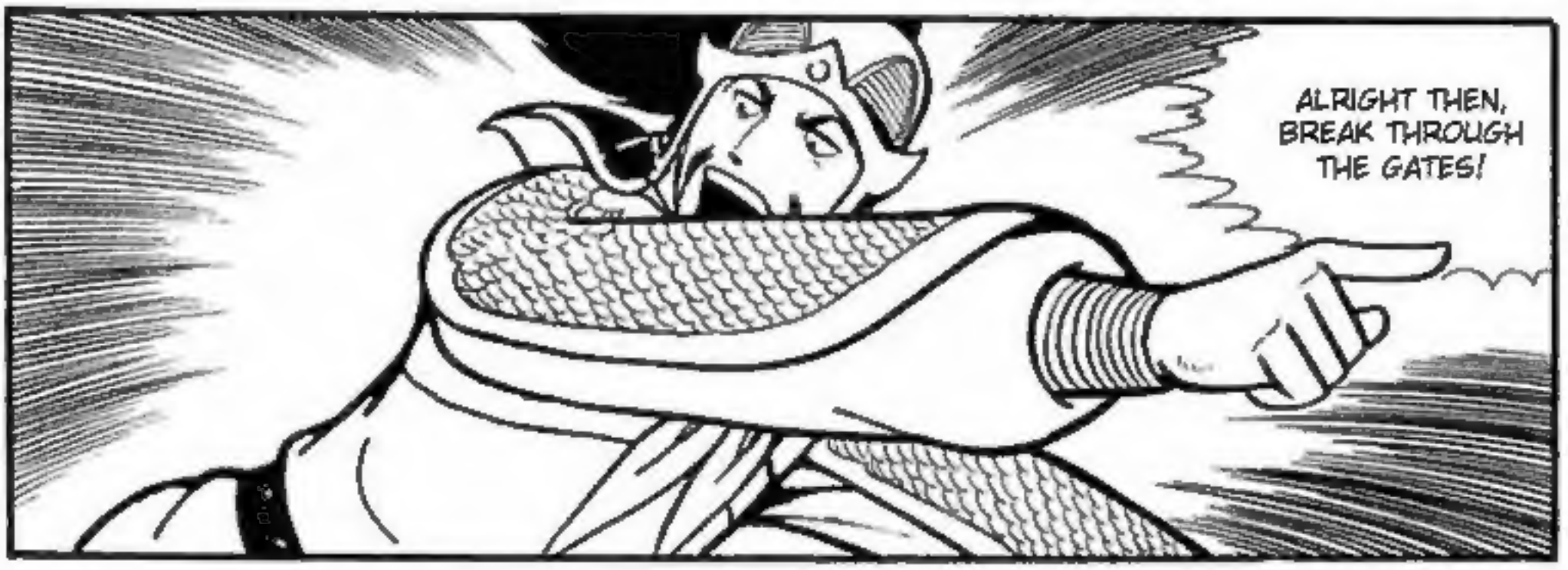
SIR, GENERAL HE JIN'S TROOPS ARE CHARGING IN HERE RIGHT NOW!

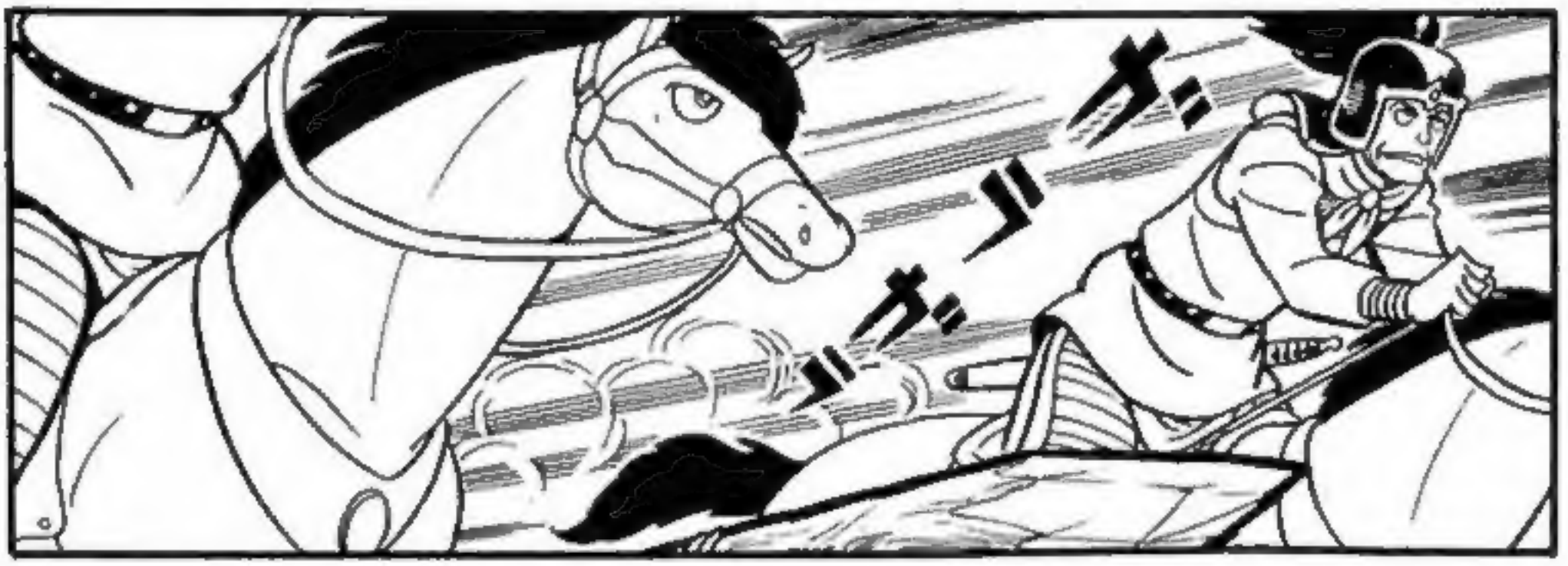
SEND ALL SOLDIERS OF THE PALACE TO GUARD THE GATES! DON'T LET A SINGLE ENEMY INSIDE!

HAS THE RAMMING LOG STILL NOT ARRIVED YET?

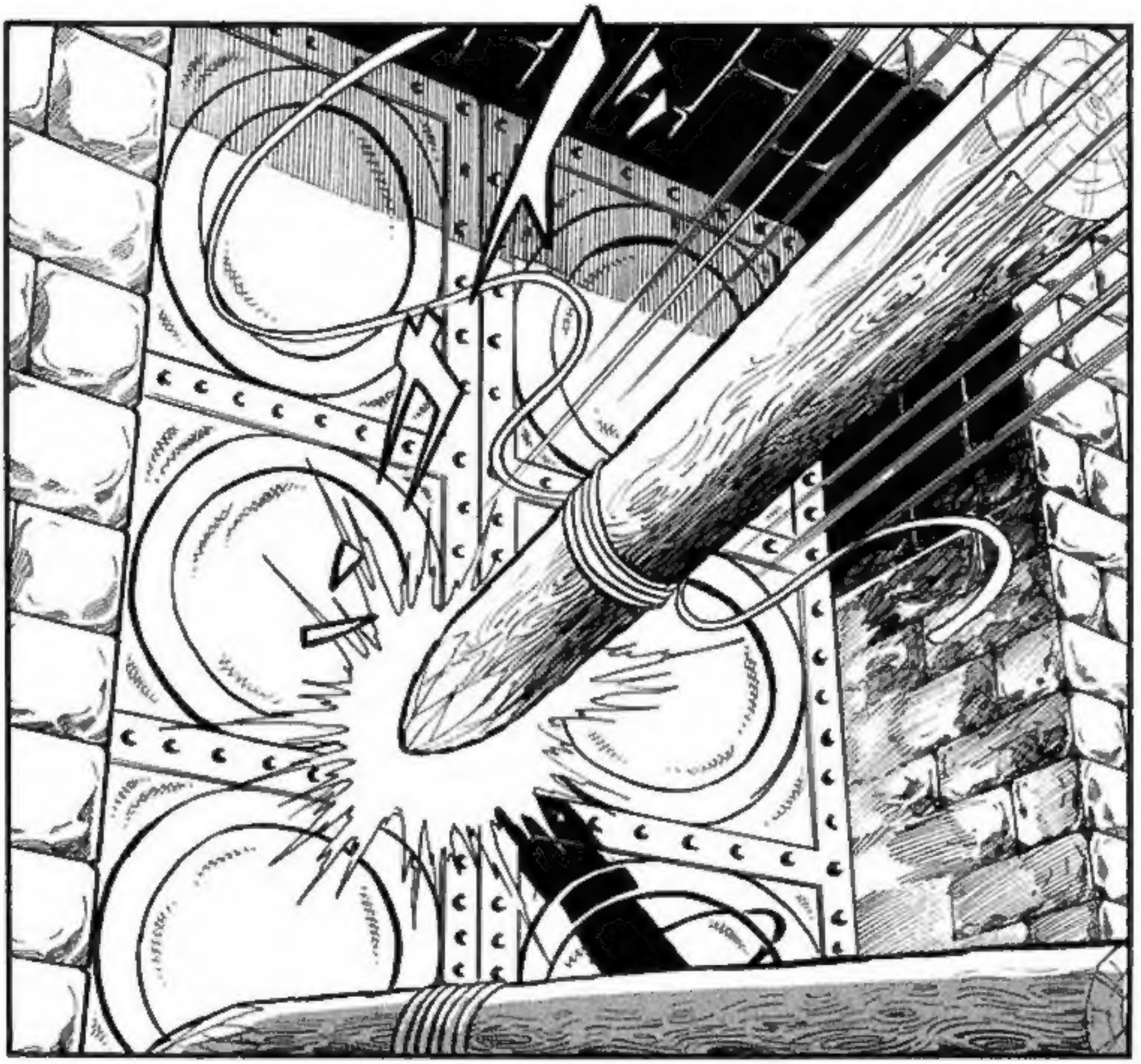
IT'S HERE SIR!

OHH!


ALRIGHT THEN, BREAK THROUGH THE GATES!

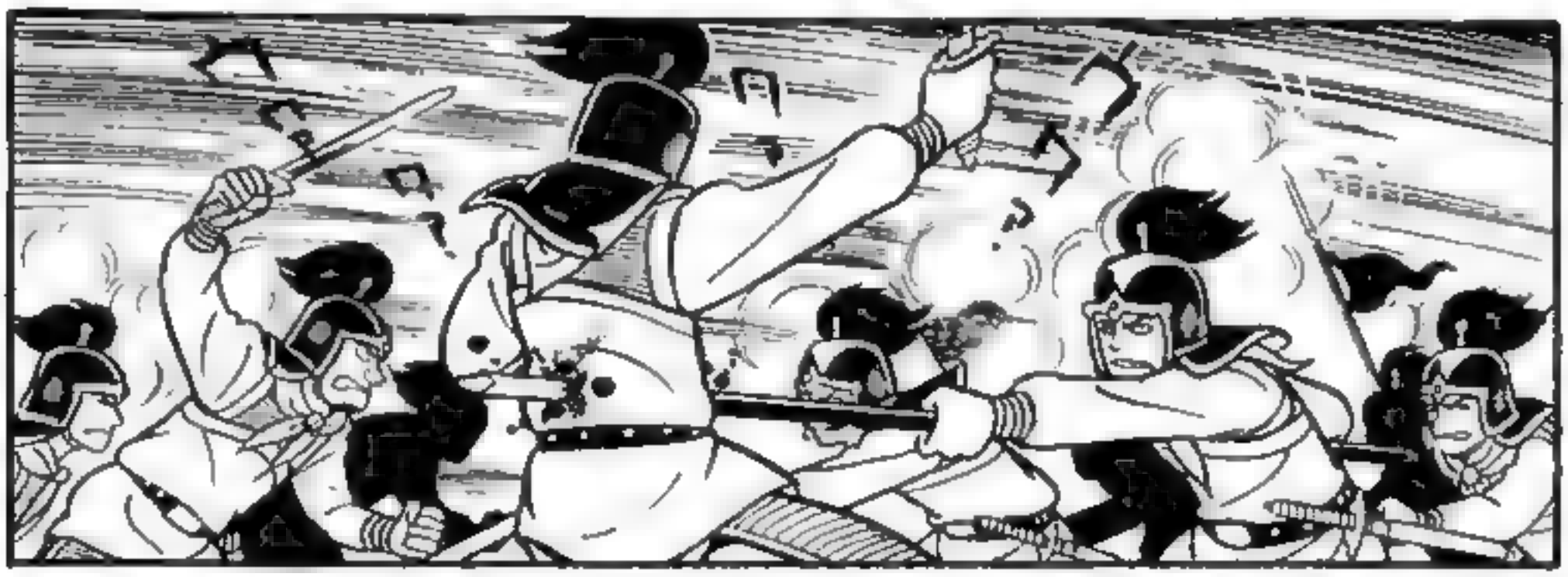


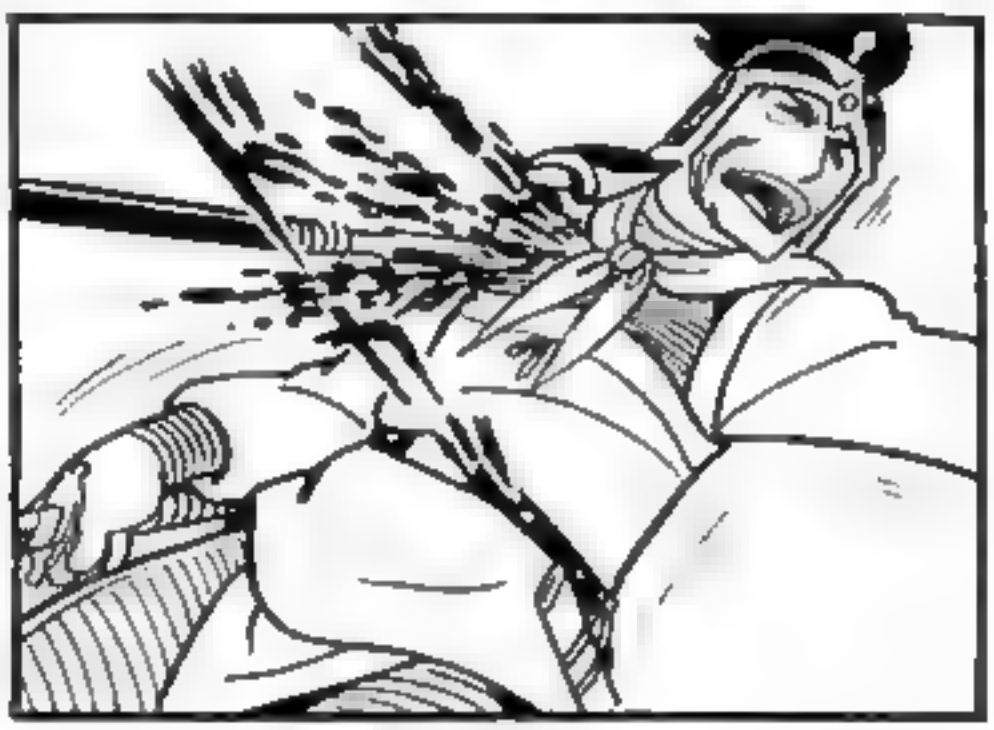
AGAIN!



AGHHH!

NOW CHARGE INSIDE!





IF WE DON'T ESCAPE SOON, WE'LL ALL BE KILLED.

BUT WE MUST BRING ALONG THE NEW EMPEROR AND PRINCE LIU XIE ALONG. THEY WILL BE OUR LAST HOPE.

ACK!!!

THEY HAVE BROKEN THROUGH THE GATES AND ARE CHARGING INSIDE! WE CANNOT HOLD THEM OFF ANY LONGER!

EMPRESS HE!

YOUR MAJESTY! PRINCE LIU XIE!

HURRY, SIRE.

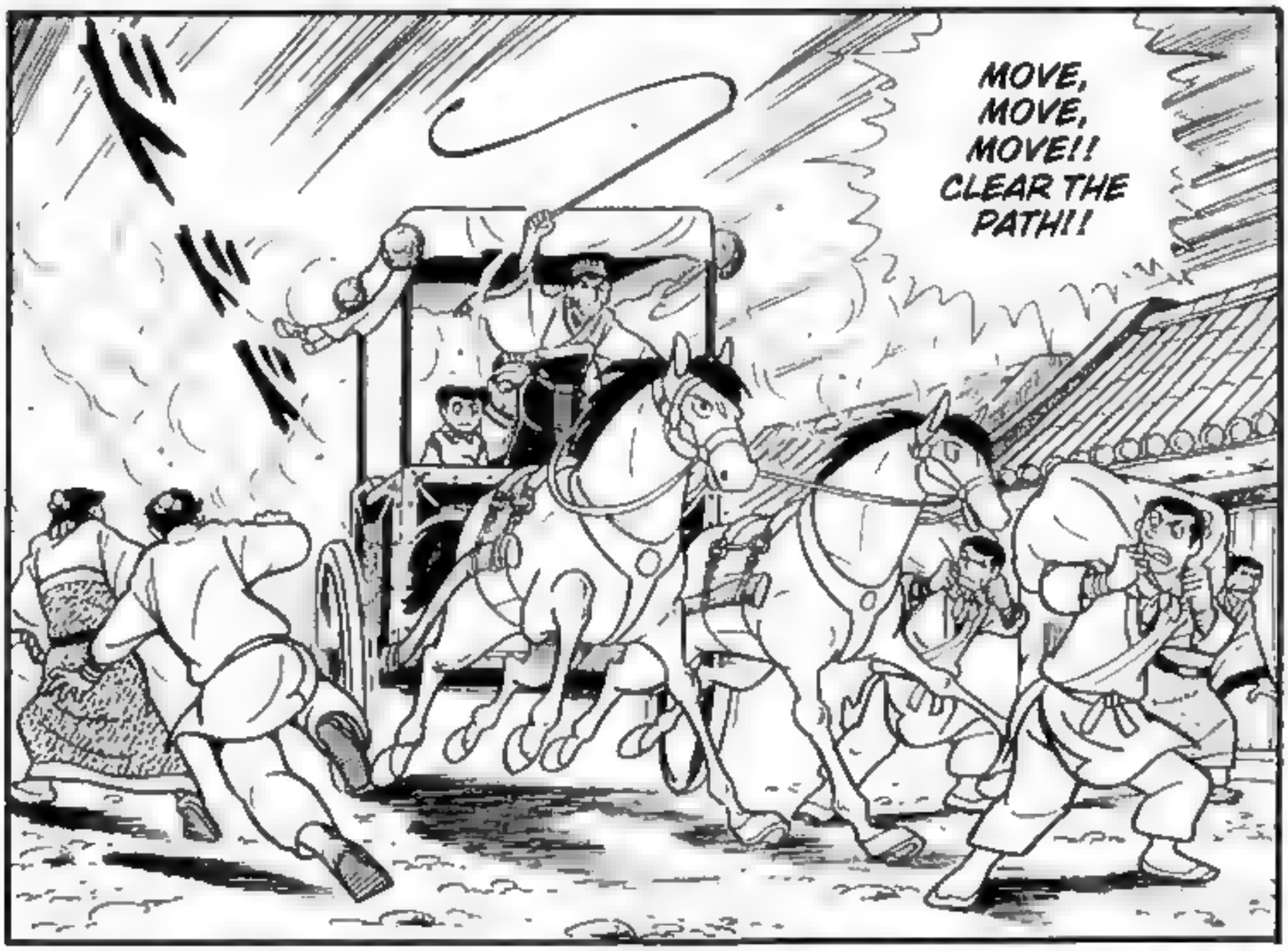
YOUR MAJESTY, THE REBELS ARE CHARGING INSIDE. WE MUST ESCAPE FROM HERE NOT A MOMENT LATER.

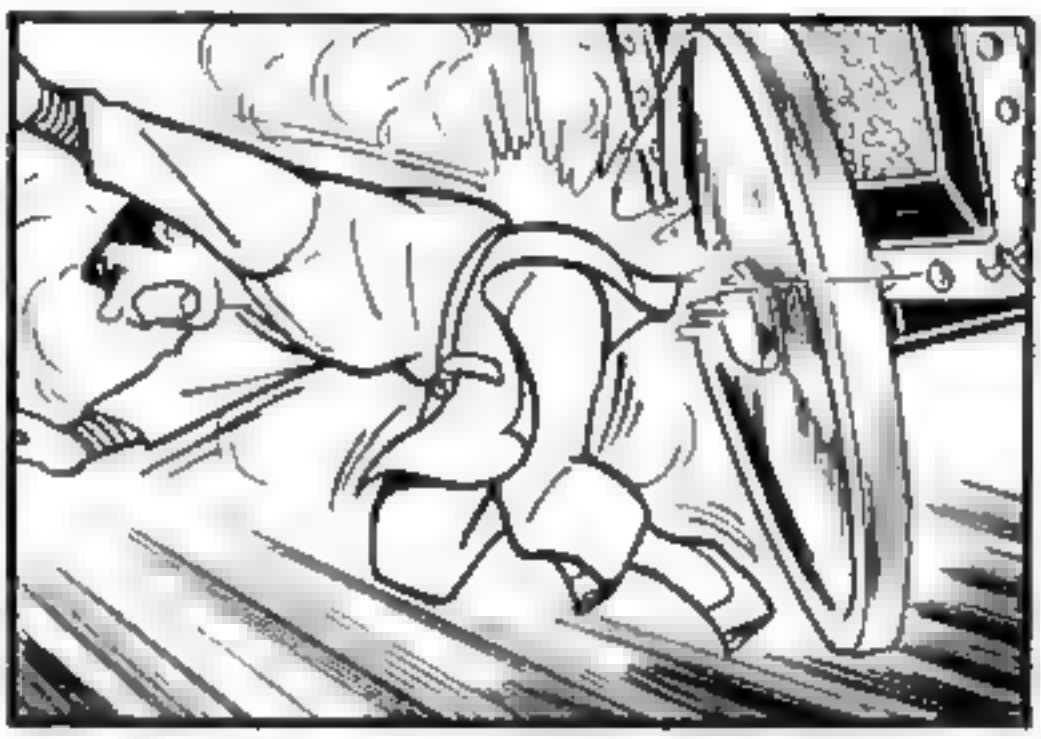
WAAAHH! I'M SCARED!

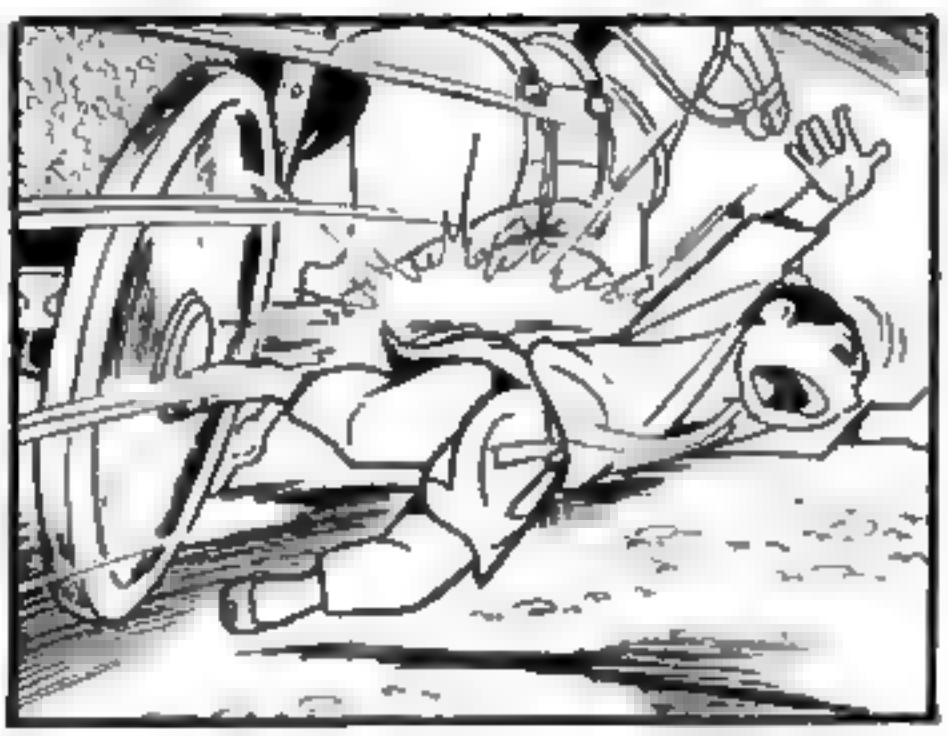
THE PALACE IS BURNING!

PLEASE SIRE, NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO BE CRYING.

IT'S WAR!
GAHH!
KYAA!


MOVE, MOVE, MOVE!! CLEAR THE PATH!!





EMPRESS HE!

WHERE IS MY SON!?

EMPRESS HE, WE MUST ESCAPE AT ONCE!

WORRY NOT, ZHANG RANG HAS ALREADY ESCORTED THE MAJESTY TO A SAFE PLACE.

NOW PLEASE, WE MUST HIDE OUR-SELVES UNTIL THIS CHAOS QUELLS DOWN.

AGHH!

EMPRESS HE, YOU NEED NOT RUN AWAY.

KYAA!

THERE IS NO REASON TO FEAR US.

WE HAVE ATTACKED THE PALACE ONLY TO AVENGE THE UNJUST DEATH OF YOUR BROTHER, GENERAL HE JIN. WE BEAR NO HARMFUL INTENTIONS TO YOU.

IT SEEMS THAT THE TEN ATTENDANTS HAVE TAKEN THEM AWAY.

CHASE AFTER THEM!

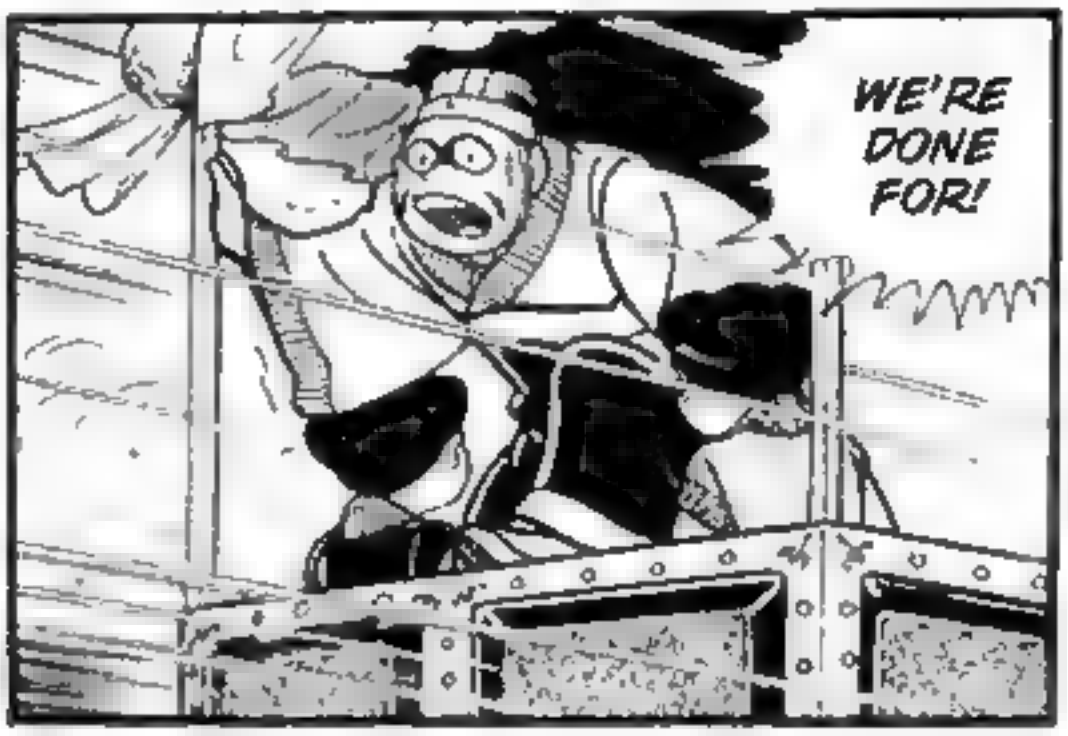
WHAT!

SIR YUAN SHAO, THE EMPEROR AND PRINCE LIU XIE ARE NOWHERE TO BE FOUND!

FIND THEM AT ALL COSTS!

IF THEY GET AWAY WITH THE EMPEROR, THEN WE'LL BECOME NOTHING BUT REBELS!

WAAAHHH!!!


WE'RE DONE FOR!

AH, THEY'RE AFTER US!

ZHANG RANG!

S-SOMEONE STOP THE CARRIAGE!

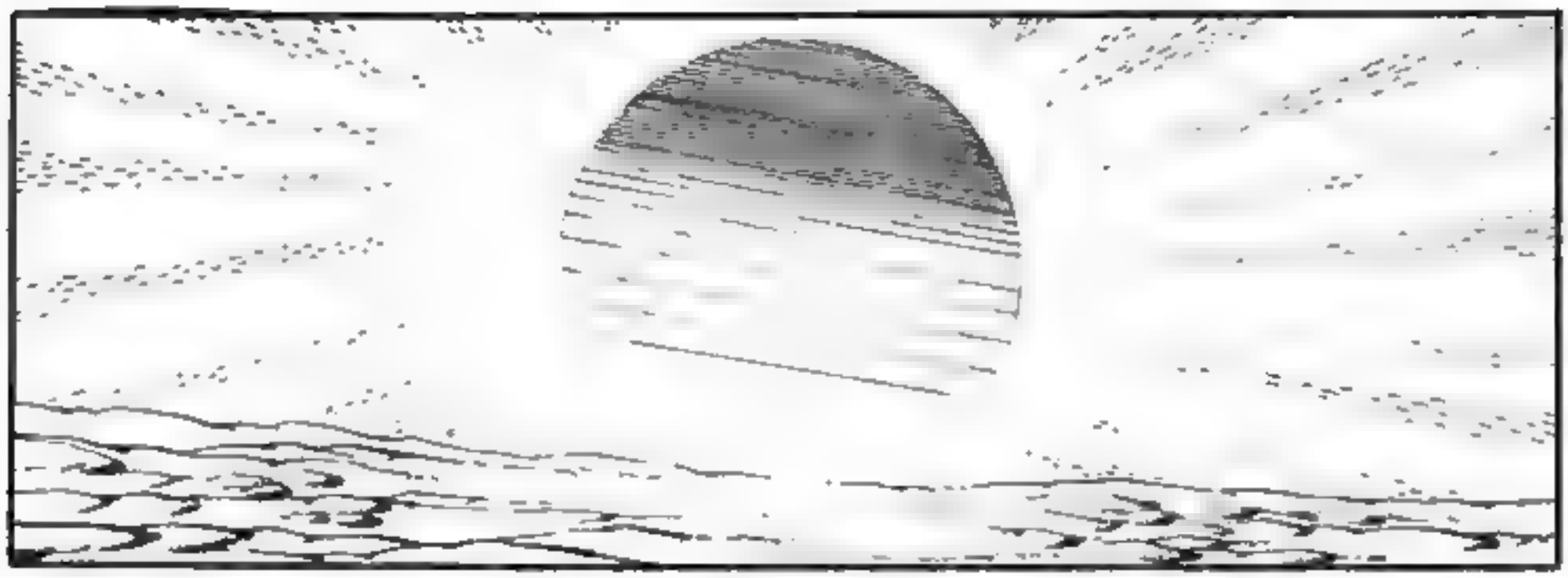
AGHH!

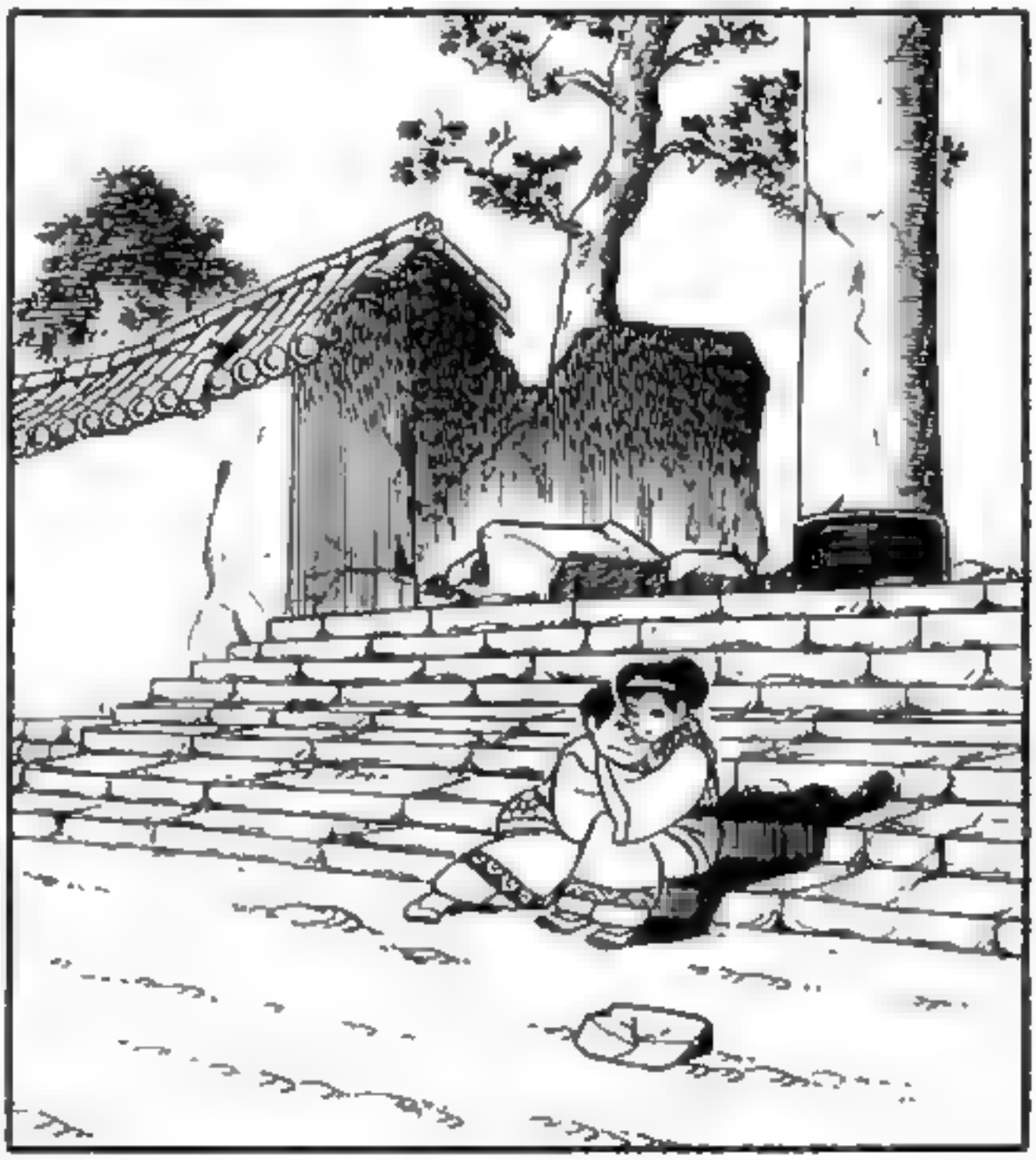
PLEASE HOLD ON, SIRE. THERE MUST BE A HOUSE NEARBY.

ARE YOU ALRIGHT, SIRE?

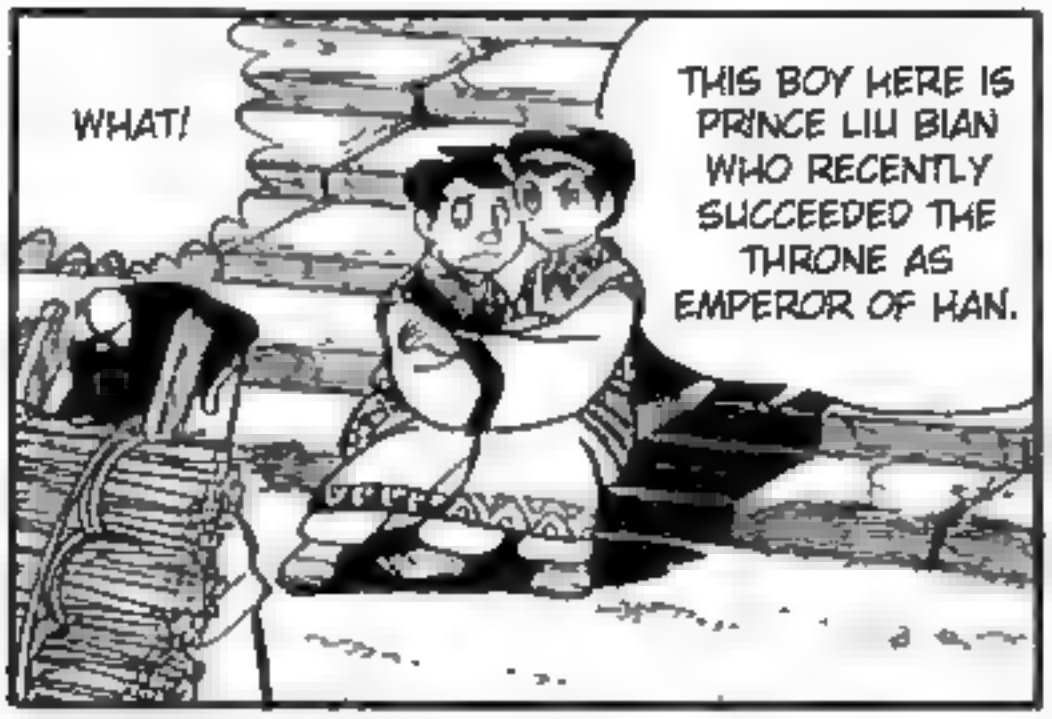
OWW, IT HURTS, IT HURTS!!

LOOK AT ALL THE PRETTY FIREFLIES FLYING ABOUT, SIRE!





HMM?


WHAT!
THIS BOY HERE IS PRINCE LIU BIAN WHO RECENTLY SUCCEEDED THE THRONE AS EMPEROR OF HAN.

YOU TWO KIDS LOOK STRANGELY OUT OF PLACE. JUST WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN SUCH A PLACE LIKE HERE?

AND YOU ARE...?

I AM THE EMPEROR'S BROTHER, PRINCE BIAN, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PRINCE OF CHENLIU.

WE ESCAPED THE PALACE AMIDST THE CHAOS LAST NIGHT BUT WE HAVE LOST OUR WAY. AS OF NOW, I AM THE ONLY ONE ATTENDING HIS MAJESTY'S SIDE.

PLEASE FORGIVE MY IMPUDENCE.

T-THEN YOU REALLY ARE THE TRUE EMPEROR!

MY NAME IS CUI YUI. I ONCE WORKED IN THE PALACE LONG AGO BUT I LEFT TO LIVE AS A SIMPLE PEASANT AFTER NOT BEING ABLE TO ENDURE THE TEN ATTENDANTS ANY LONGER.

I'M SURE YOUR MAJESTY AND YOURSELF ARE VERY FAMISHED. PLEASE, COME TO MY HOME.

THIS MAY NOT BE MUCH BUT PLEASE HAVE AS MUCH AS YOU WISH.

PLEASE EAT THIS TO REPLENISH SOME STRENGTH, SIRE.

WE ARE INDEBTED TO YOUR KINDNESS.

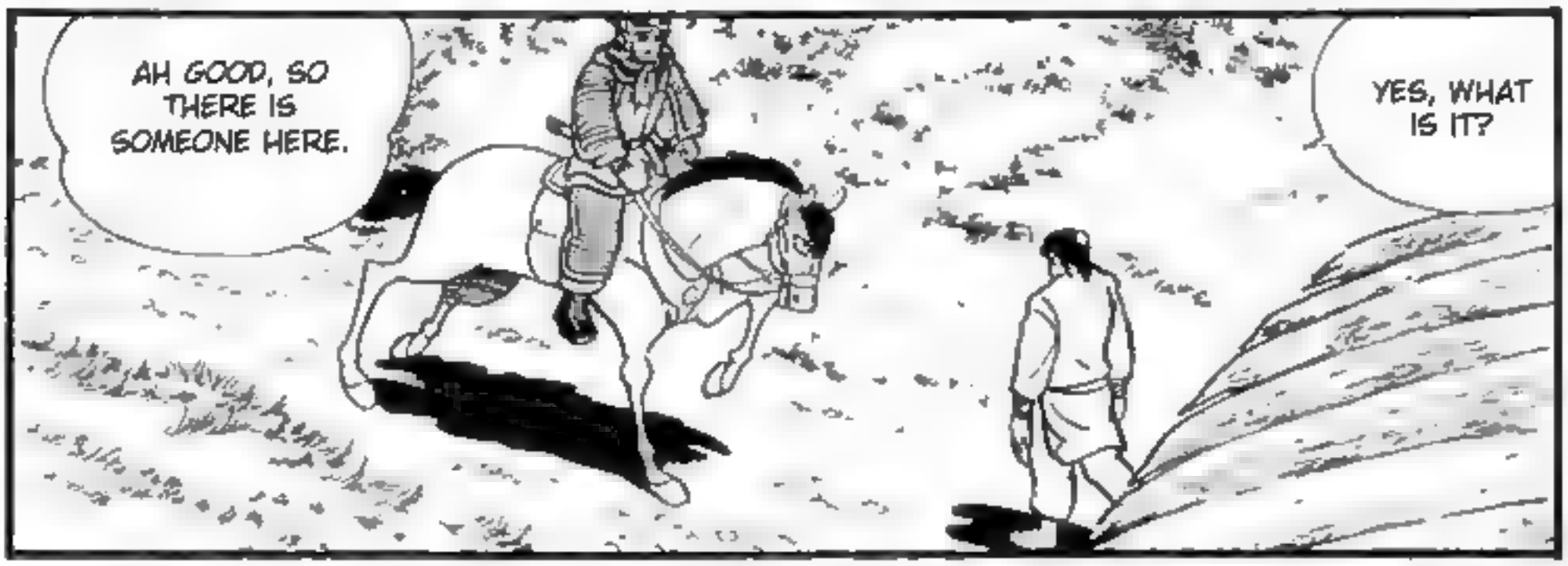
WHAT AN AWE-INSPIRING YOUNG BOY. HE TRULY IS THE ONE WHO HAS INHERITED THE BLOOD OF THE EMEPROR.

YES, SIRE.

THANK YOU, CUI YUI. WE SHALL GRACIOUSLY ACCEPT THIS MEAL.

I SHALL SEE WHO IT IS OUTSIDE, SIRE.

IS ANYONE HOME!?


AH GOOD, SO THERE IS SOMEONE HERE.
YES, WHAT IS IT?

THAT HEAD...

HMM?

AH, I SEE. WELL, YOU ARE IN *GOOD* FORTUNE THEN.

?

HMM?

WE HAVE EXTERMINATED ALL OF THESE SCUM LAST NIGHT BUT WE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR THE EMPEROR WHO WENT MISSING AS WELL. I HAVE *COME* TO YOU TO ASK FOR A DRINK, BEING WEARY FROM SEARCHING EVERYWHERE FOR HIS HIGNESS LAST NIGHT.

THIS IS THE HEAD OF ONE OF THOSE HEINOUS TEN ATTENDANTS.

WHAT!?

THE EMPEROR IS IN MY HOME.

I AM MIN GONG. I HAVE COME TO SAFELY ESCORT YOUR MAJESTY.

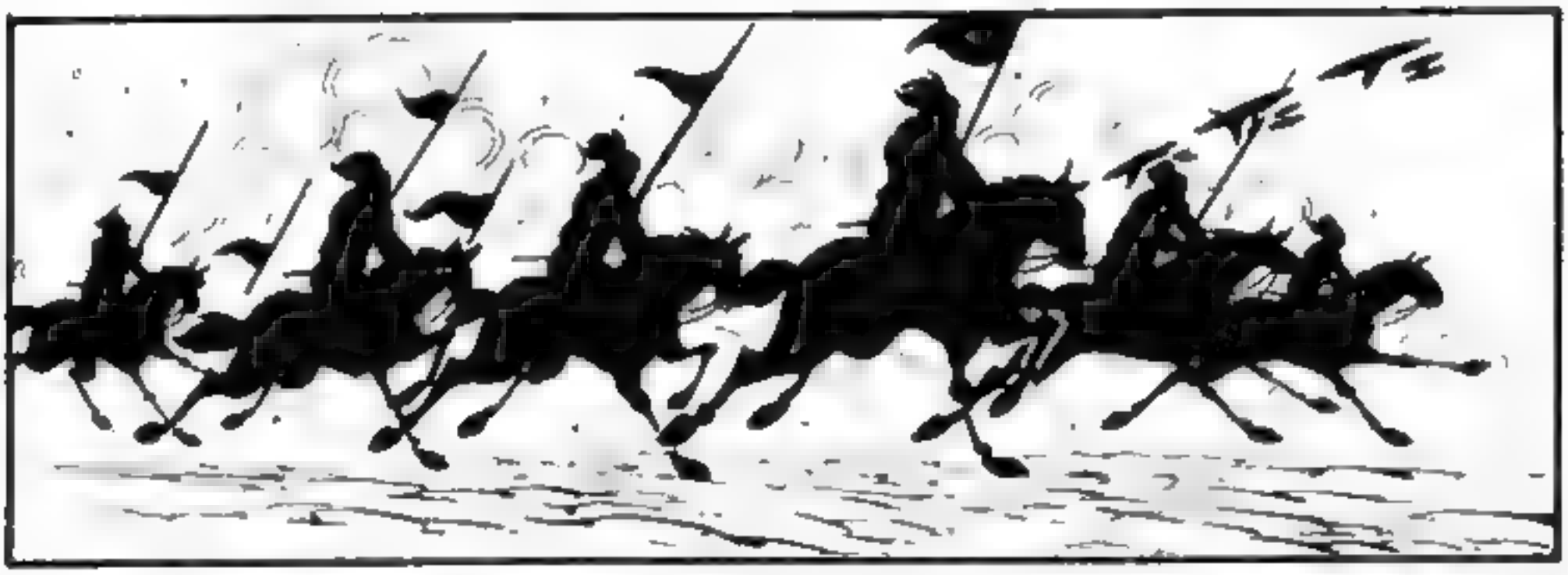
YOUR MAJESTY! ARE YOU UNINJURED?

THANK YOU.

OK.

LET US GO THEN.

WE MUST LEAVE AT ONCE. THE PEOPLE ARE WORRIED OVER YOUR MAJESTY'S SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE.



HMM?
SIR, LOOK!

AH.

THE EMPEROR!

WE HAVE BEEN SEARCHING EVERYWHERE FOR SIRE.

ARE YOU UNINJURED, YOUR MAJESTY?

AH!

ALRIGHT, LET US ESCORT HIS MAJESTY BACK TO THE CAPITAL!

TO SURROUND US IS SHEER INSOLENCE!

YOU ARE IN THE PRES-ENCE OF THE EMPEROR!

ARE THEY ENEMIES OR ALLIES?

WHOSE TROOPS ARE THAT?

STAND DOWN AT ONCE!

THE EMPEROR? JUST WHERE IS THIS EMPEROR OF YOURS?

LITTLE BRAT...

AND JUST WHOM MIGHT *YOU* BE!?

OH HO HO... AND JUST WHO'S THE ONE TELLING ME TO STAND DOWN?

I AM GENERAL DONG ZHUO OF LIANGZHOU!

CHENLIU!?

AND I AM THE EMEPEROR'S BROTHER, PRINCE OF CHENLIU.

AH, NO. THAT'S...

IS HE HERE TO ESCORT OR ABDUCT THE EMPEROR!?

AND JUST FOR WHAT PURPOSE HAS DONG ZHUO COME HERE!?

ANSWER CLEARLY!

Y-YES...

I HAVE COME TO ESCORT HIS MAJESTY.

DO YOU NOT KNOW OF PROPER MANNERS AT ALL!? NOW GET OFF THAT HORSE THIS INSTANCE!

IF YOU HAVE COME TO ESCORT HIS MAJESTY, THEN WHY ARE YOU STILL ON THAT HORSE!?

I, DONG ZHUO, HAVE COME TO ESCORT HIS MAJESTY.

T-THANK YOU.

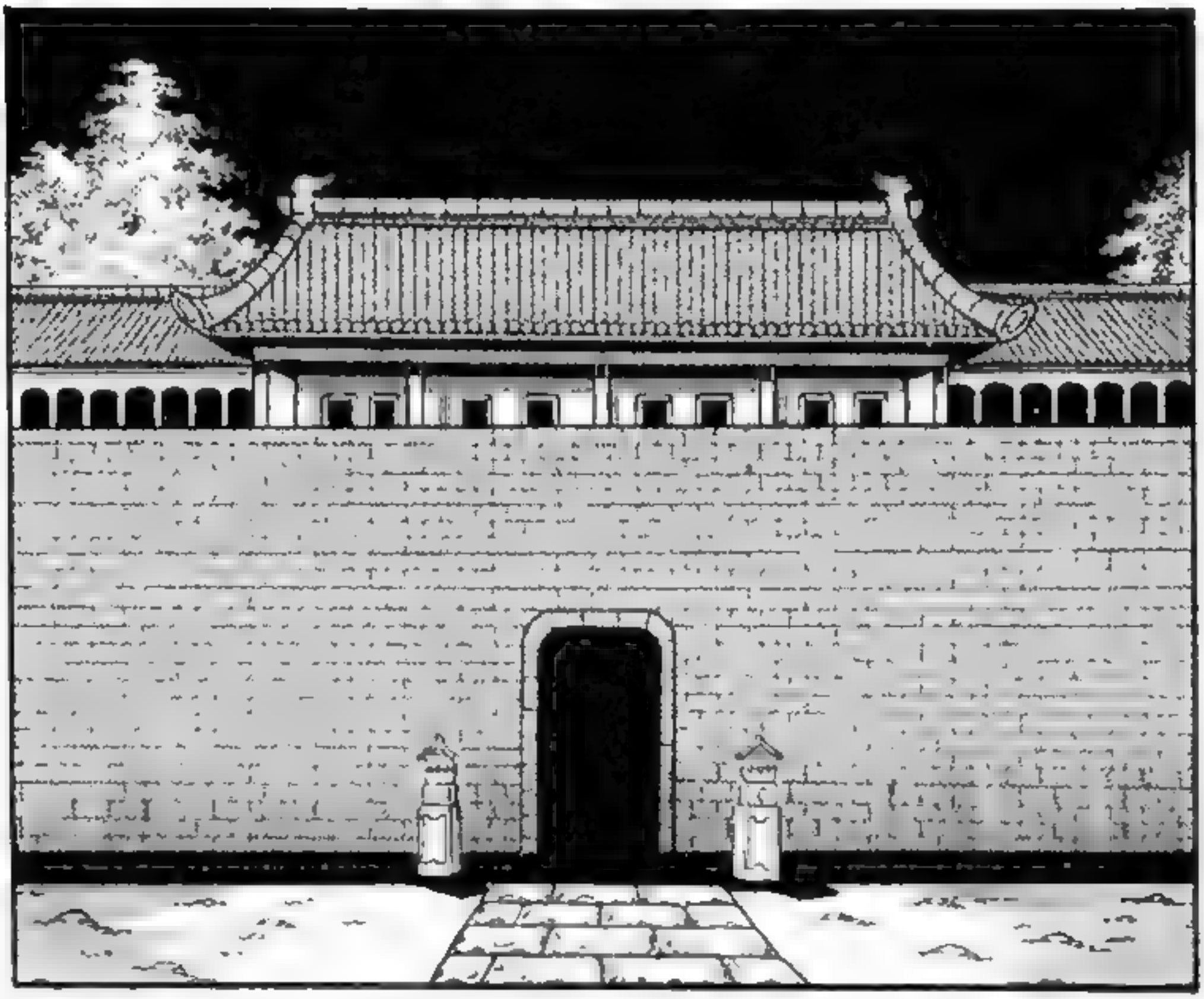
ON BEHALF OF THE EMPEROR, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR HARD WORK.

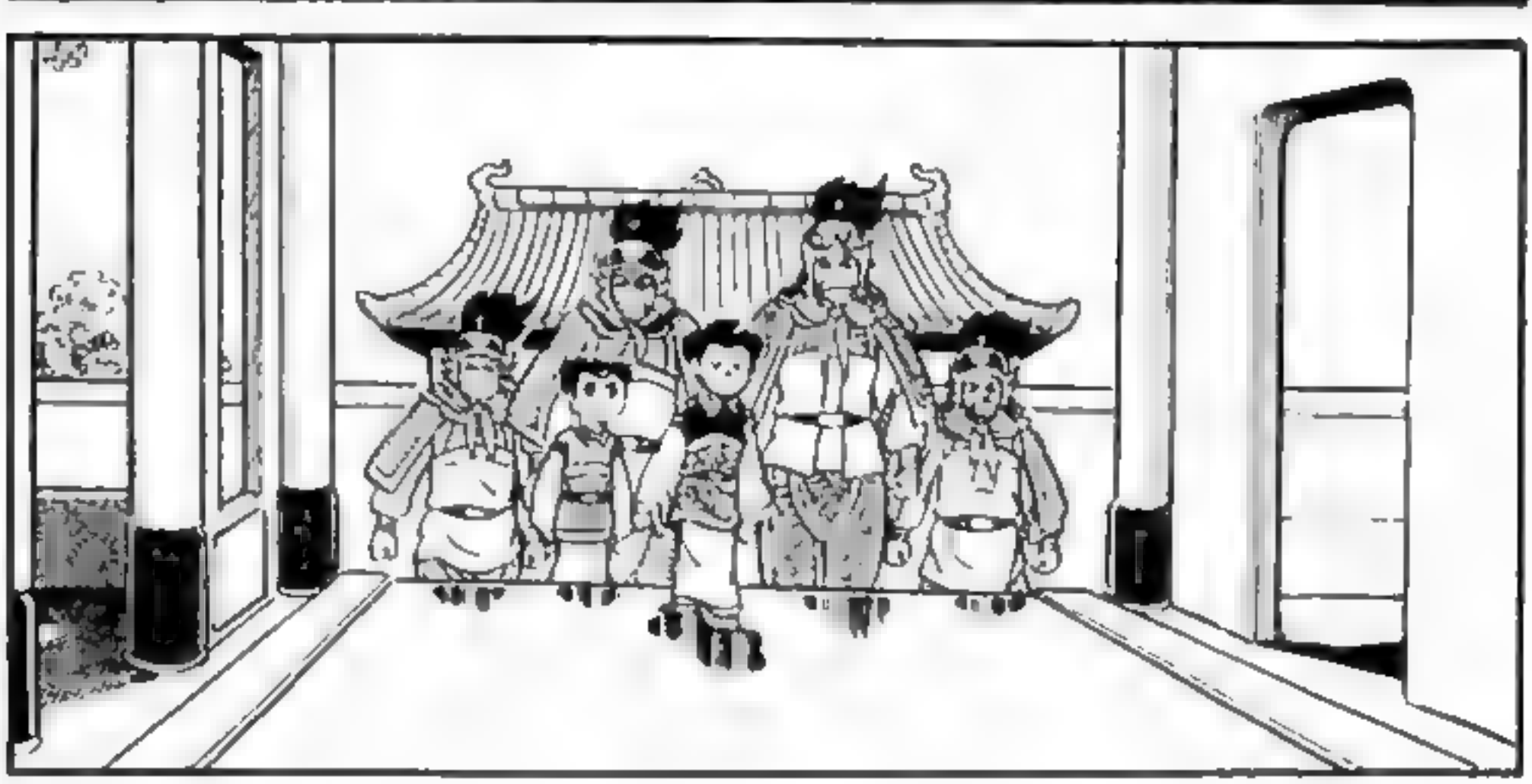
ALRIGHT THEN.

THAT PRINCE OF CHENLIU HAS THE TRUE ROYAL BLOOD AS WELL AS THE QUALITIES BEFITTING AN EMPEROR.

HAHA... COMPARED TO THE CURRENT EMPEROR WHO HAS GENERAL HE JIN'S COMMONER BLOOD FLOWING IN HIS VEINS,

THE FATHER AND SON FROM BINGZHOU





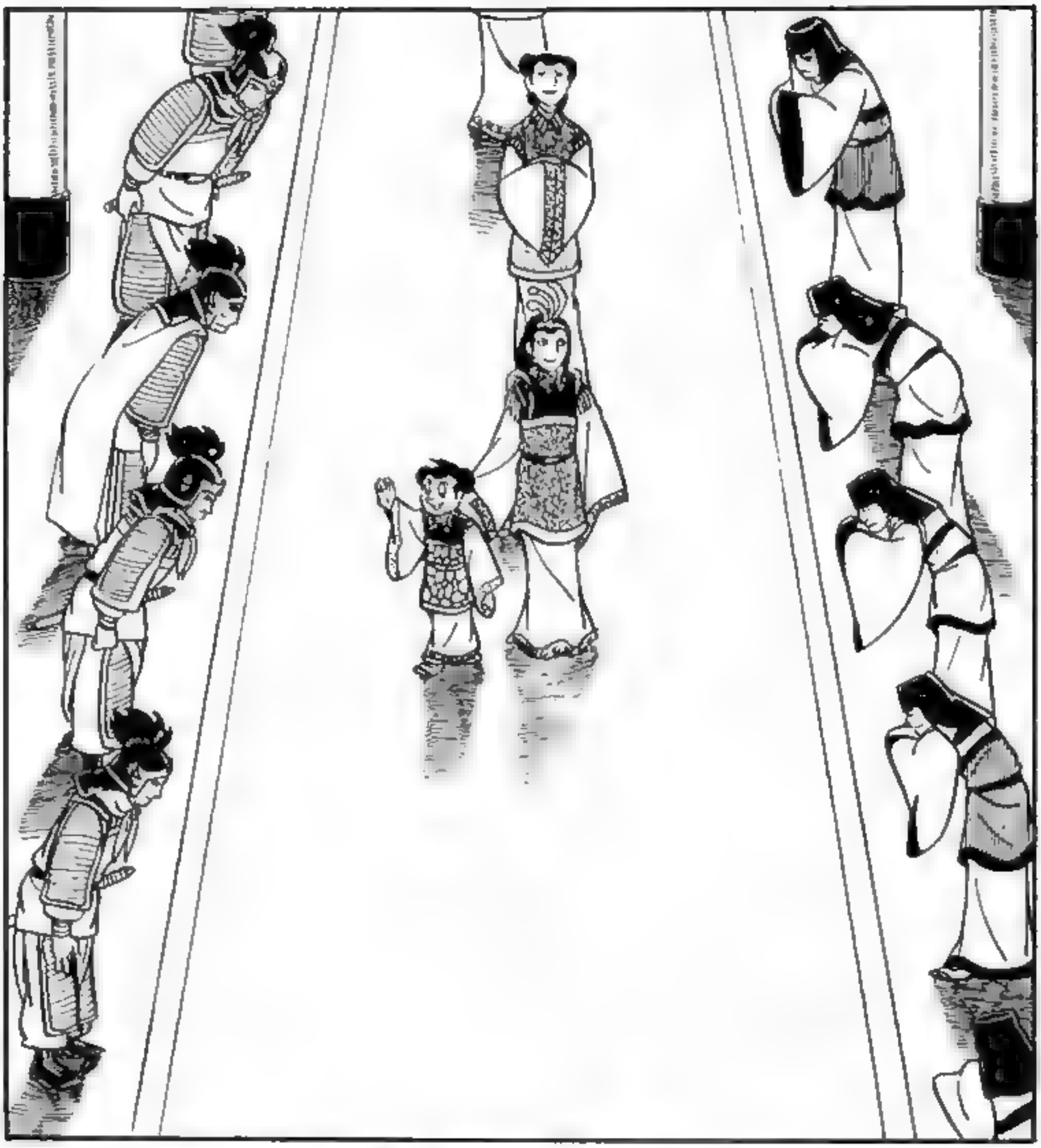
YOUR MOTHER WAS EVER SO WORRIED.

OHH, YOUR MAJESTY!

I THANK YOU ALL FOR BRINGING HIS MAJESTY BACK SAFELY. MAY YOU CONTINUE TO BE OF SERVICE TO HIS MAJESTY IN THE FUTURE.

SO YOU MUST BE GENERAL HE JIN'S SISTER, EMPRESS HE.

COME NOW, YOU MUST BE TIRED. LET US GO TO THE INNER QUARTERS AND TAKE A REST.



I SHALL DO SO.

YES,

PRINCE CHENLIU, YOU SHOULD GO AND TAKE A REST TOO, SIR.

YES, SIR.

LI RU, LET US RETURN AS WELL FOR TODAY.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

BUT GENERAL, WOMEN SURE ARE MYSTERIOUS CREATURES.

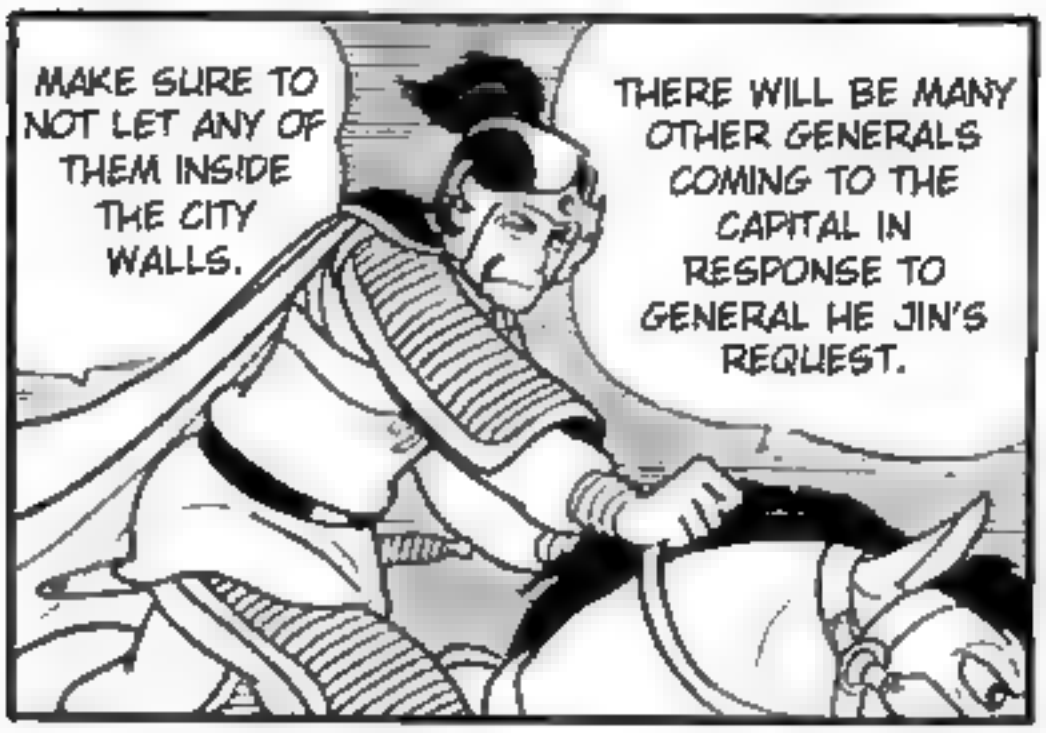
HAHA... AS THE SAYING GOES, WHAT GOES AROUND, COMES AROUND.

TO THINK THAT EMPRESS HE, WHO LOOKS SO BEAUTIFUL, WOULD POISON AND KILL PRINCE CHENLIU'S MOTHER.

EMPRESS HE WILL MEET HER JUST FORTUNE ONE DAY AS WELL.

DO GOOD, AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE GOOD FORTUNE. BUT DO EVIL, AND YOU SHALL BE MET WITH MISFORTUNE.

BY THE WAY LI RU, STATION OUR TROOPS OUTSIDE THE CASTLE.


MAKE SURE TO NOT LET ANY OF THEM INSIDE THE CITY WALLS.
THERE WILL BE MANY OTHER GENERALS COMING TO THE CAPITAL IN RESPONSE TO GENERAL HE JIN'S REQUEST.

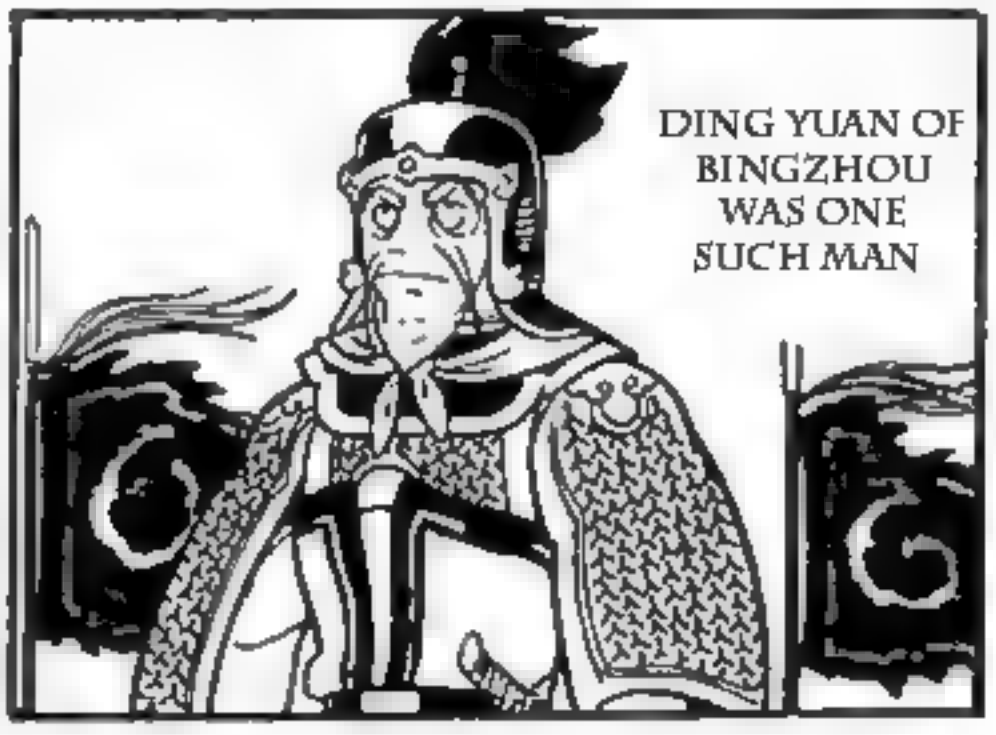
AND ONE MORE THING.

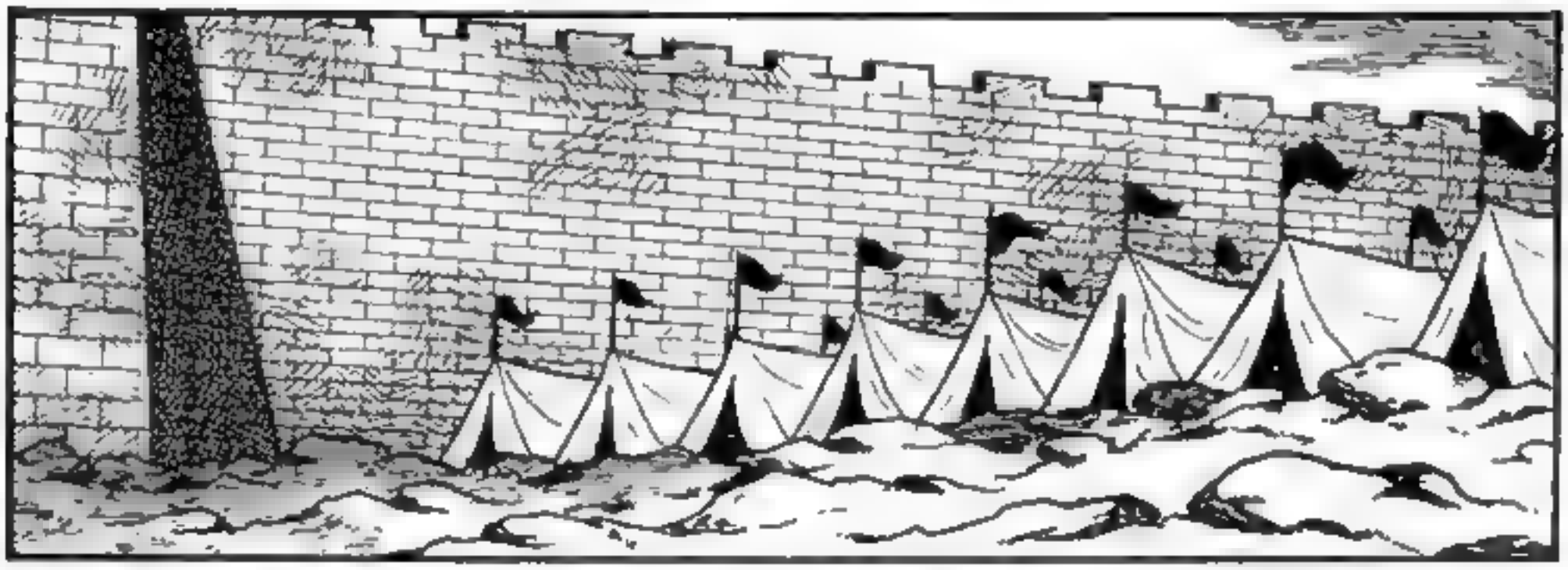
IT SEEMS SIR IS ALREADY SCHEMING SOME PLAN.

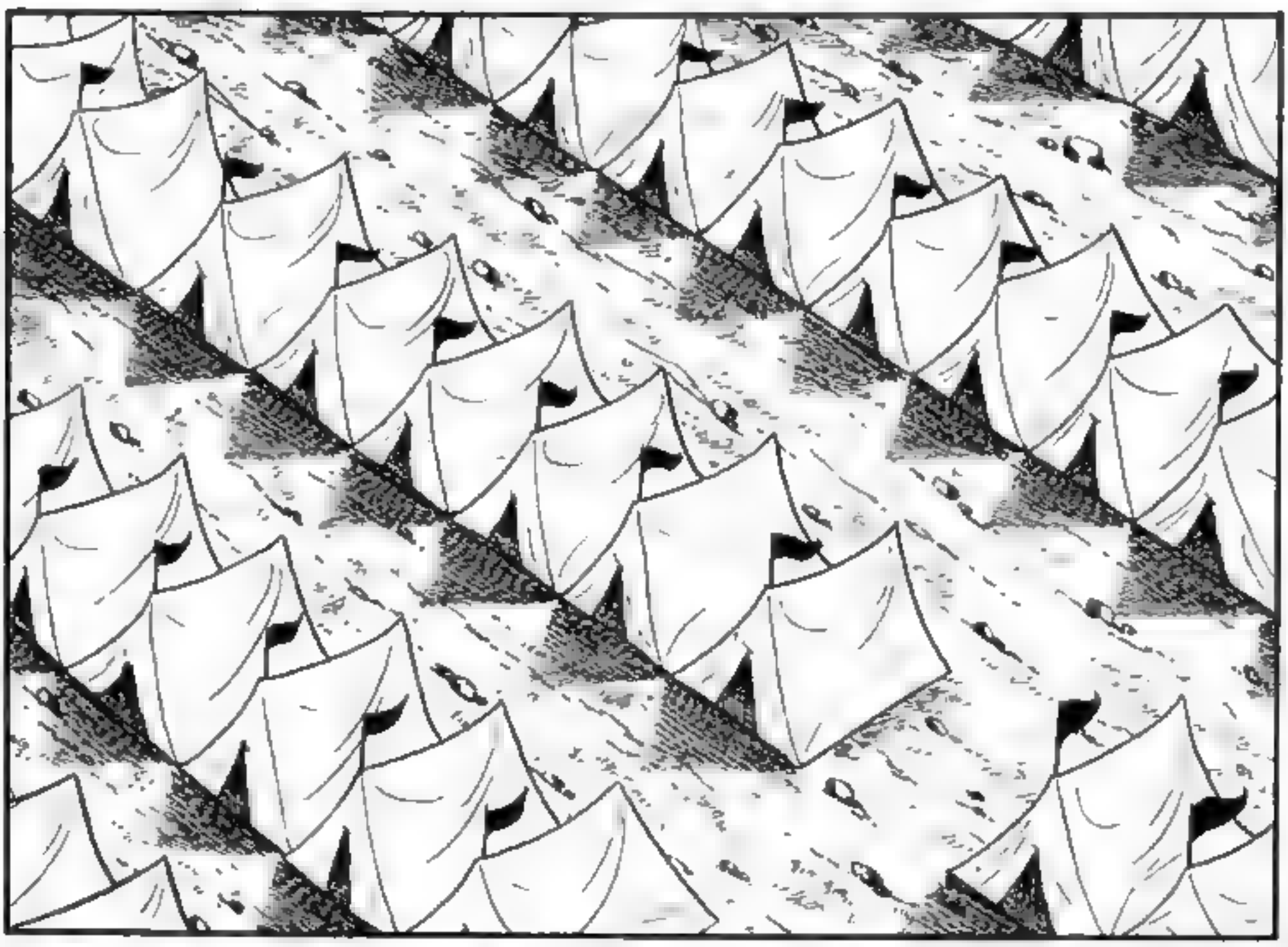
IT WAS AS DONG ZHUO SAID

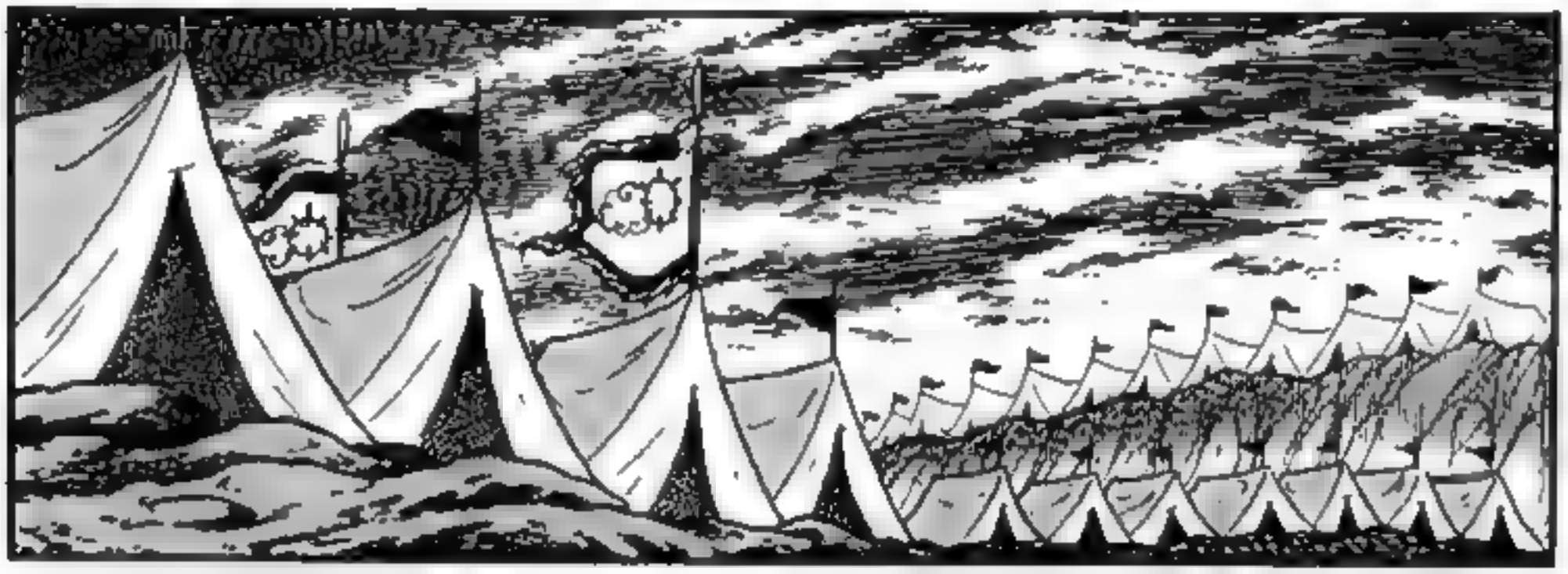
VARIOUS GENERALS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARRIVED AT LUOYANG, ONE BY ONE, IN RESPONSE TO HE JIN'S LETTER

HMM.


DING YUAN OF BINGZHOU WAS ONE SUCH MAN







I BELIEVE THEY ARE OF DONG ZHUO OF LIANGZHOU.

WHOSE TROOPS ARE THOSE?

THEY SEEM LARGE ENOUGH TO SWALLOW THE CAPITAL OF LUOYANG WHOLE.

SOMEONE IS COMING.

AND WHOM MIGHT YOU BE?

WELL, WELL, IF IT ISN'T DING YUAN, THE GOVERNOR OF BINGZHOU.

AND WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS WITH US?

I AM LI RU, ONE OF GENERAL DONG ZHUO'S COMMANDERS.

?

LATE?

I HAVE COME TO TELL YOU THAT YOUR ARRIVAL WAS A LITTLE LATE.

WHAT!

YES. GENERAL HE JIN HAS ALREADY BEEN ASSASSINATED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS.

BUT ALL IS WELL, FOR THE TEN ATTENDANTS HAVE BEEN ALL TAKEN CARE OF AND THE PALACE HAS RETURNED TO PEACE ONCE AGAIN.

HMM, I SEE...

I AM AFRAID TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR TRIP HERE HAS BEEN AN UNNECESSARY ONE.

AS YOU WISH.

I MUST AT LEAST GREET HIS MAJESTY.

BUT I CAN'T JUST RETURN BACK LIKE THIS WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING.

SO I WAS LATE... OH WELL. IN ANY CASE, IT WOULD BE RUDE FOR A SUBJECT TO JUST LEAVE WITHOUT GREETING HIS LORD.

ALRIGHT MEN, SET UP THE CAMPS HERE!

YES.

WE SHALL SET UP BASE HERE FOR TONIGHT.

WHAT IS IT, SIR?

LI RU.

THE TRUTH IS THAT I AM THINKING OF DEPOSING THE CURRENT EMPEROR.

SO THAT IS WHAT SIR HAS BEEN THINKING OF...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

AND THEN REPLACING HIM WITH PRINCE OF CHENLIU.

HE JIN'S ASSEMBLED GENERALS ARE ALL NOW RETURNING BACK TO THEIR PROVINCES ONE BY ONE.

IS THAT SO?

A MOST EXCELLENT IDEA, GENERAL. IF YOU WISH TO REPLACE THE EMPEROR WITH PRINCE CHENLIU SO THAT YOU MAY RULE OVER THIS COUNTRY, THAN NOW WOULD BE THE BEST CHANCE TO DO SO.

MOST OF THE ONES REMAINING NOW ARE THOSE THAT WISH TO FLATTER YOU, FEARING YOUR POWER AND INFLUENCE.

YES SIR, I SHALL PREPARE FOR IT RIGHT AWAY.

ALRIGHT THEN, LET US HOLD A BANQUET TOMORROW AS A DISPLAY OF MY UNQUESTIONABLE INFLUENCE, IN WHICH I SHALL PROPOSE MY PLAN.

GARDEN OF-WARMTH-AND-BRIGHTNESS

園明溫

THE MEAT, THE WINE... EVERYTHING HERE IS JUST EXQUISITE! AS EXPECTED OF GENERAL DONG ZHUO.

THIS IS DELICIOUS!

IT SEEMS ALL THE OTHER GENERALS AND COURT OFFICIALS ARE HERE TONIGHT TO GLIMPSE AT DONG ZHUO'S INFLUENCE.

I DON'T WANT TO SAY THIS OUT LOUD, BUT NOW THAT HE JIN IS DEAD, WHOEVER DOESN'T FOLLOW DONG ZHUO IS BOUND TO BE OUT OF LUCK.

AND HE LEADS 200,000 SOLDIERS! PEOPLE LIKE US JUST CAN'T COMPARE.

WELL, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE IMPOLITE TO DECLINE THE OFFER, BEING THAT I HAD NO GOOD REASON.

WHY EXACTLY DID YOU ATTEND ANYWAYS, FATHER?

HOW TIRESOME. I SHOULD NOT HAVE COME, LU BU.

THESE MEN ARE ALL NOTHING MORE THAN DONG ZHUO'S LITTLE PAWNS.

GENTLEMEN, MAY I PRESENT TO YOU, GENERAL DONG ZHUO!

PLEASE ENJOY THE MEAL TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT.

THANK YOU FOR ALL COMING, GENTLEMEN.

GENERAL, MAY WE DO YOU THE HONOUR AS WELL?

YES, YES.

PLEASE GENERAL, LET ME DO THE HONOUR OF POURING YOU A DRINK.

YOU REALLY ARE A MAN THAT STANDS OUT ABOVE THE REST.

AS EXPECTED OF THE GREAT GENERAL LEADING A FORCE OF 200,000 MEN.

I WISH YOU THE BEST OF THE LUCK.

LONG LIVE THE GENERAL!

NOW THEN, I HAVE SOMETHING TO DISCUSS WITH YOU.

I BELIEVE THAT AN EMPEROR SHOULD BE AN INTELLIGENT INDIVIDUAL, ENDOWED WITH MANY SKILLS. HE MUST BE BENEVOLENT TO GAIN RESPECT OF HIS FOLLOWERS.

HE LOVES THE STUDIES AND THE ARTS, AND IS QUITE WISE FOR HIS AGE.

COMPARED TO HIM, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF PRINCE OF CHENLIU?

NOW WAIT JUST THERE!

AND AS SUCH, WE NEED A CAPABLE LEADER TO GUIDE US!!

WE ARE IN AN AGE OF UNREST!

THE EMPEROR DECIDES TO WHOM THE THRONE SHALL GO TO NEXT. IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT WE AS SUBJECTS SHOULD GOSSIP ABOUT.

WELL, IF IT ISN'T DING YUAN OF BINGZHOU. DO YOU HAVE AN OPINION YOU WISH TO EXPRESS?

IT IS STRANGE THAT YOU SHOULD BRING UP SUCH A TOPIC WHEN WE ARE ALL LEISURELY DRINKING.

I AM NOT GOSSIP-ING. I AM MERELY STATING WHICH OPTION MIGHT BE BEST FOR THE GOOD OF THIS COUNTRY.

GENTLEMEN, NO MATTER WHAT FAULTS OR FLAWS THE EMPEROR HAS,

WHAT!

A TALK CONCERNING THE COURSE OF THIS COUNTRY IS A MATTER NOT TO BE BROUGHT UP SO CASUALLY IN A SETTING SUCH AS THIS!

E—!

U—!

YOU... DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO GO AGAINST ME...?

NO I DO NOT. JUST WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

PERHAPS IT IS NOT BEST TO SPEAK OF SUCH MATTERS IN AN INFORMAL BANQUET LIKE THIS.
PLEASE CALM DOWN GENERAL.

NNGHH...

KILL HIM.

WHAT!

DAMN THAT DING YUAN! IF IT WEREN'T FOR HIM, EVERYBODY WOULD HAVE SILENTLY AGREED TO MY PROPOSAL!

Y-YES SIR.

I SAID ASSASSI-NATE HIM ON HIS WAY BACK!

AH LI RU. AND THE GUESTS?

GENERAL!

BUT I NEVER EXPECTED DING YUAN TO OPPOSE YOU, SIR.

WELL, HE WON'T DISAGREE ANYMORE.

I SEE. WELL, I CAN ALWAYS BRING UP THE ISSUE NEXT TIME.

THEY HAVE ALL RETURNED.

I GAVE THE WORD FOR HIM TO BE AMBUSHED ON HIS WAY BACK.

?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SIR?

DID YOU NOT SEE THE MAN STANDING BEHIND DING ZHOU AT THE BANQUET TONIGHT?

G-GENERAL, THAT MAY HAVE BEEN A BAD DECISION.

THAT MAN IS LU BU, DING YUAN'S ADOPTED SON. HE IS SAID TO BE A WARRIOR OF THE HIGHEST CALIBER, SECOND TO NONE.

LU BU, I CAN NOW SEE WHAT THAT DONG ZHUO IS SCHEMING. HE PLANS TO FORCIBLY SEAT PRINCE OF CHENLIU TO THE THRONE SO HE MAY SECRETLY WIELD ALL POWER AND RULE OVER THE CAPITAL.

STAND BACK FATHER.

HMM?

THERE ARE ASSASSINS AFTER YOUR LIFE, FATHER.

WHAT'S WRONG?

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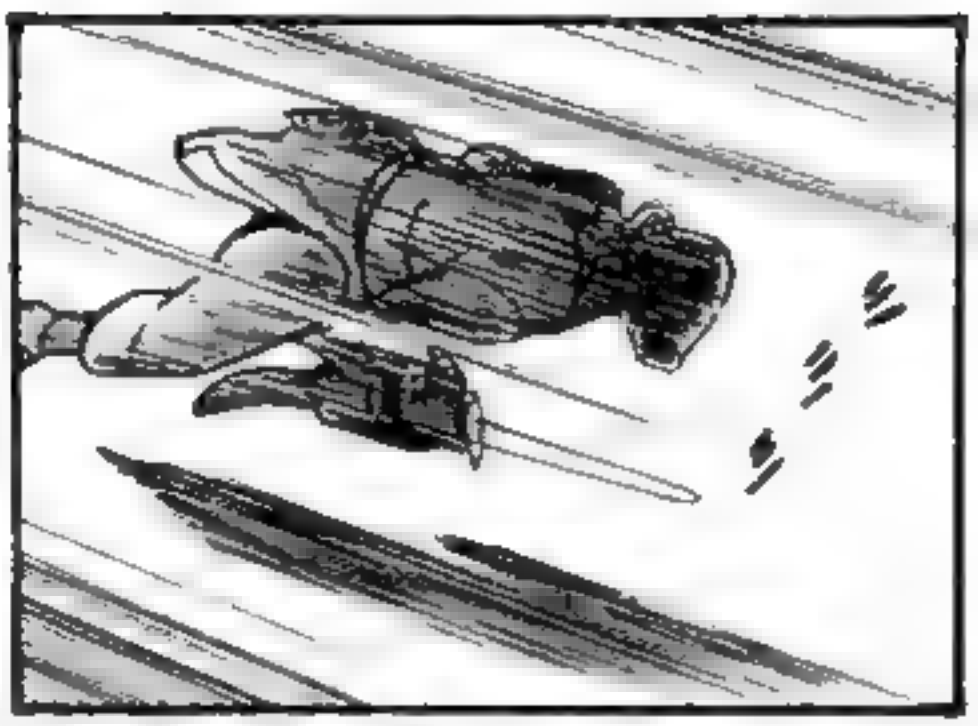
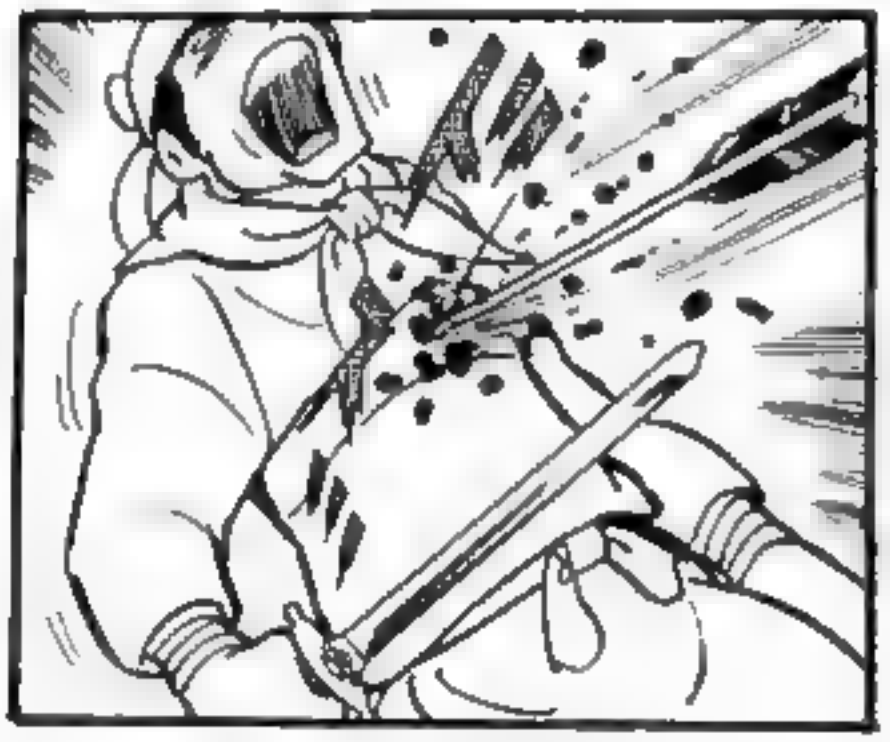
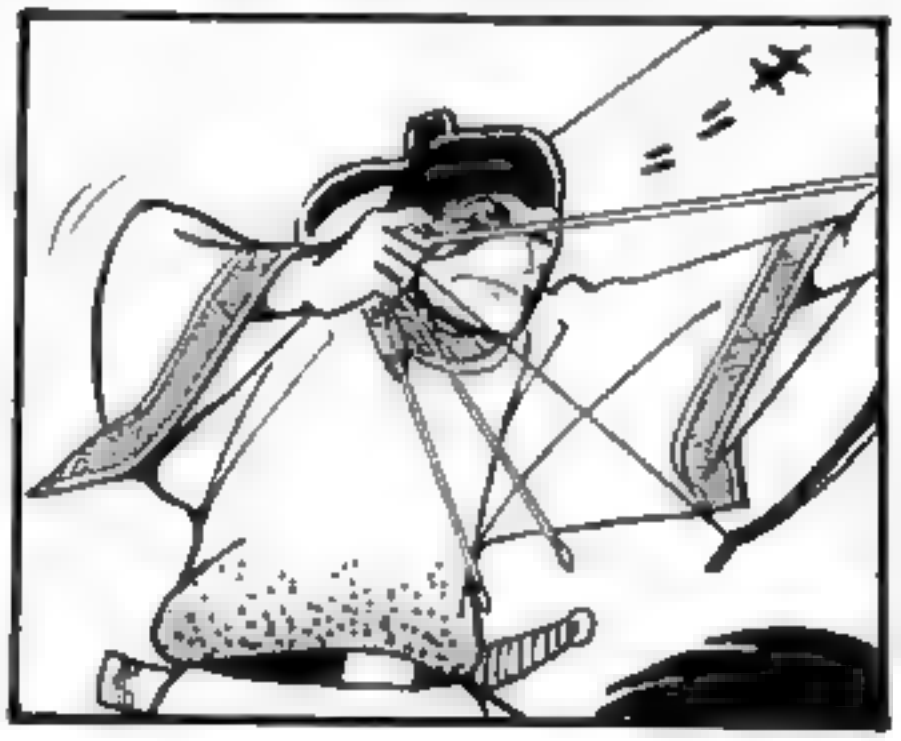
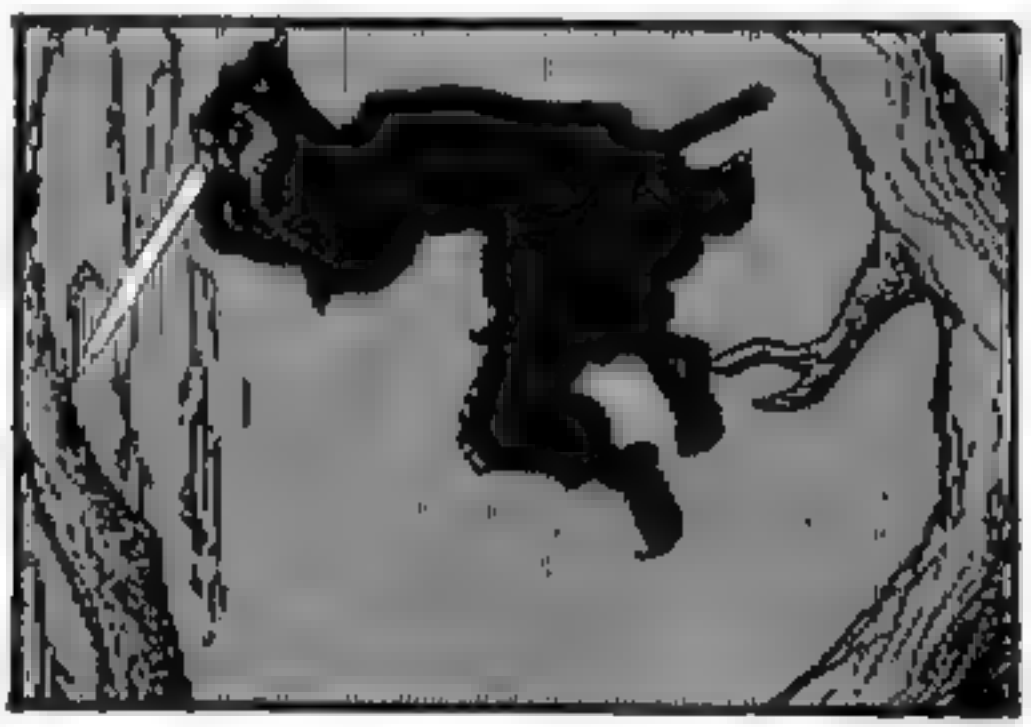
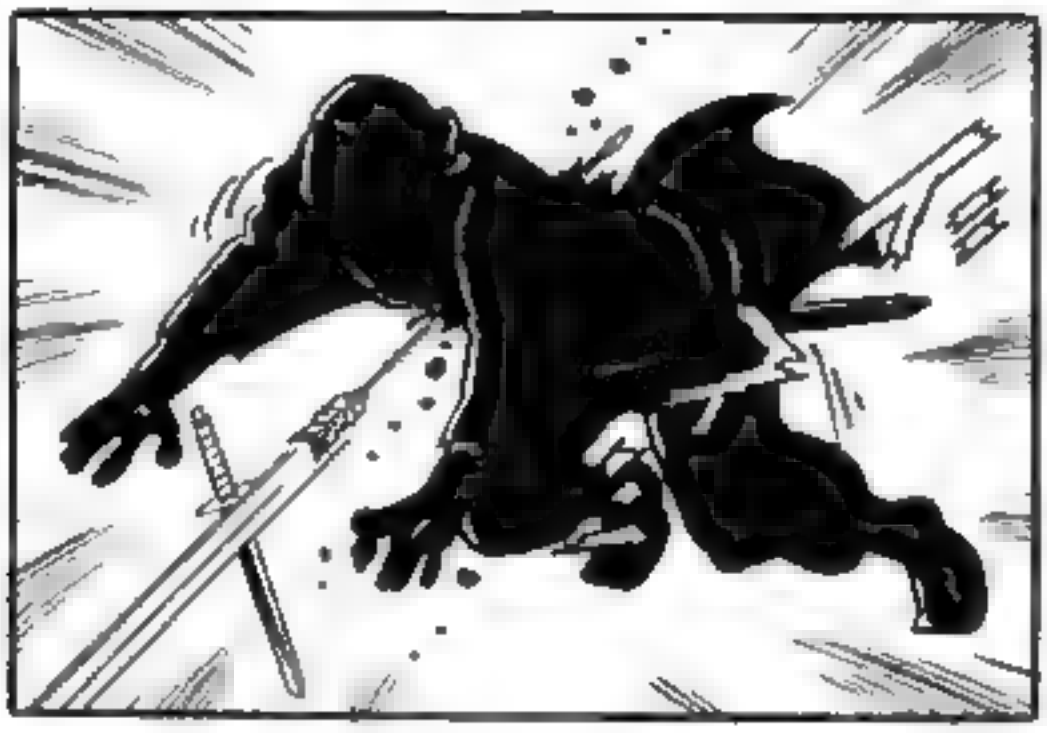
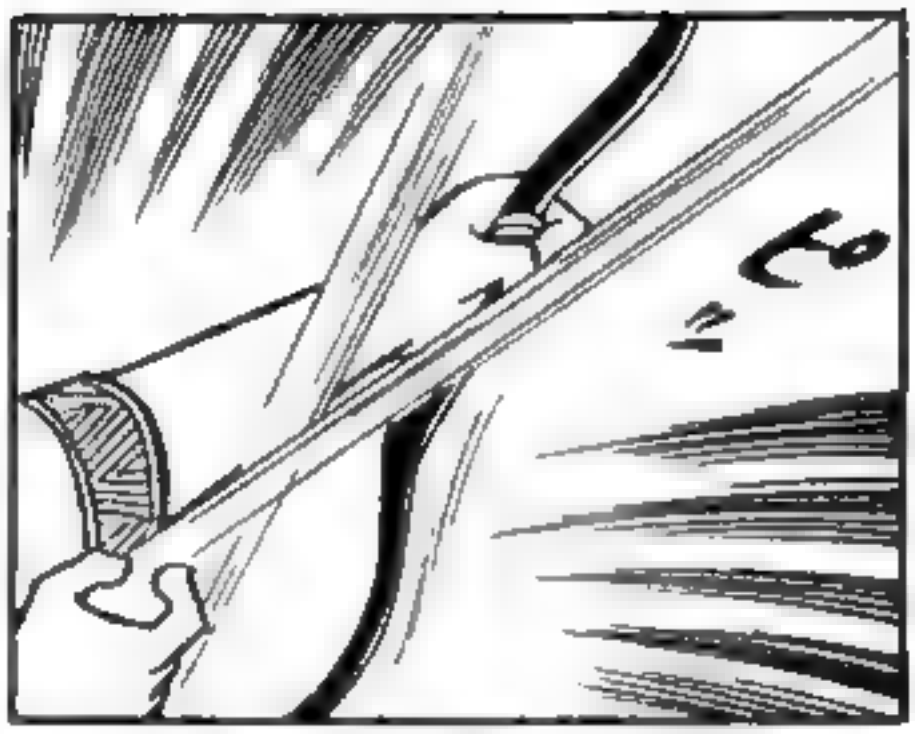










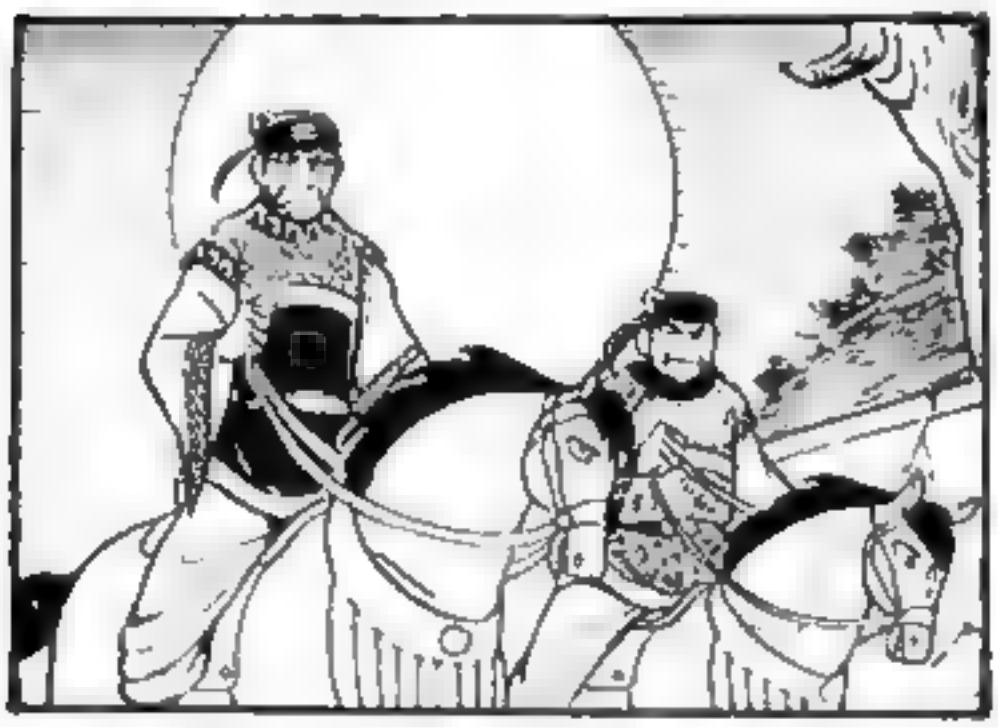


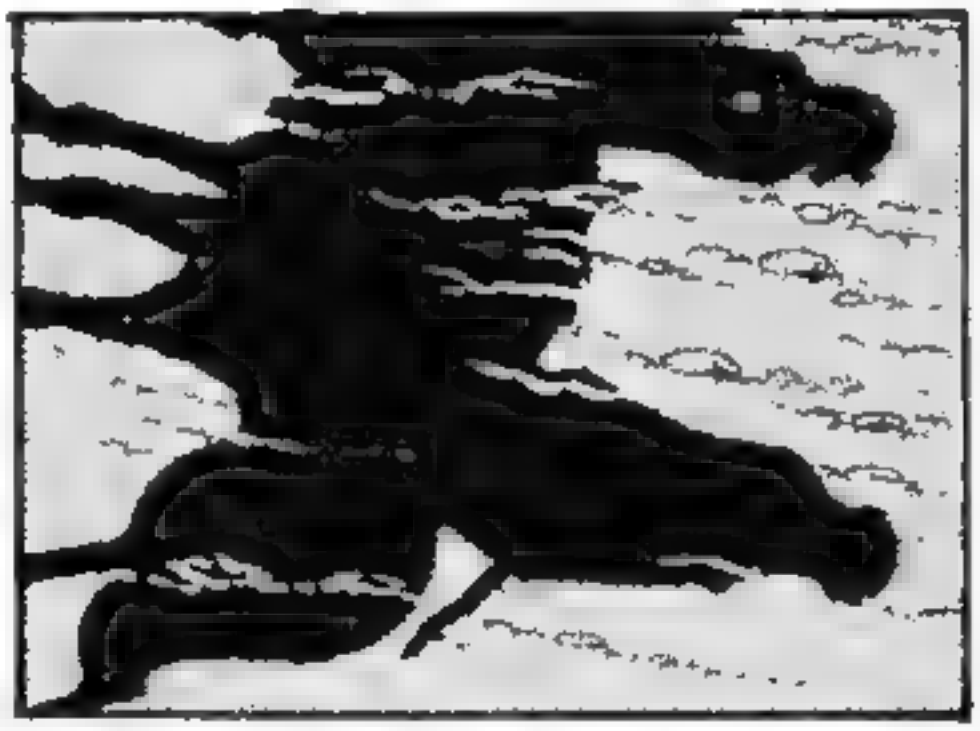
YOUR ARCHERY SKILLS ARE EXCELLENT AS ALWAYS.
THE ROAD IS ALL CLEAR NOW.

IF THAT IS HOW HE WANTS TO PLAY THINGS, THEN I HAVE AN IDEA OF MY OWN AS WELL.
DONG ZHUO'S INTENTIONS ARE NOW AS CLEAR AS DAY.

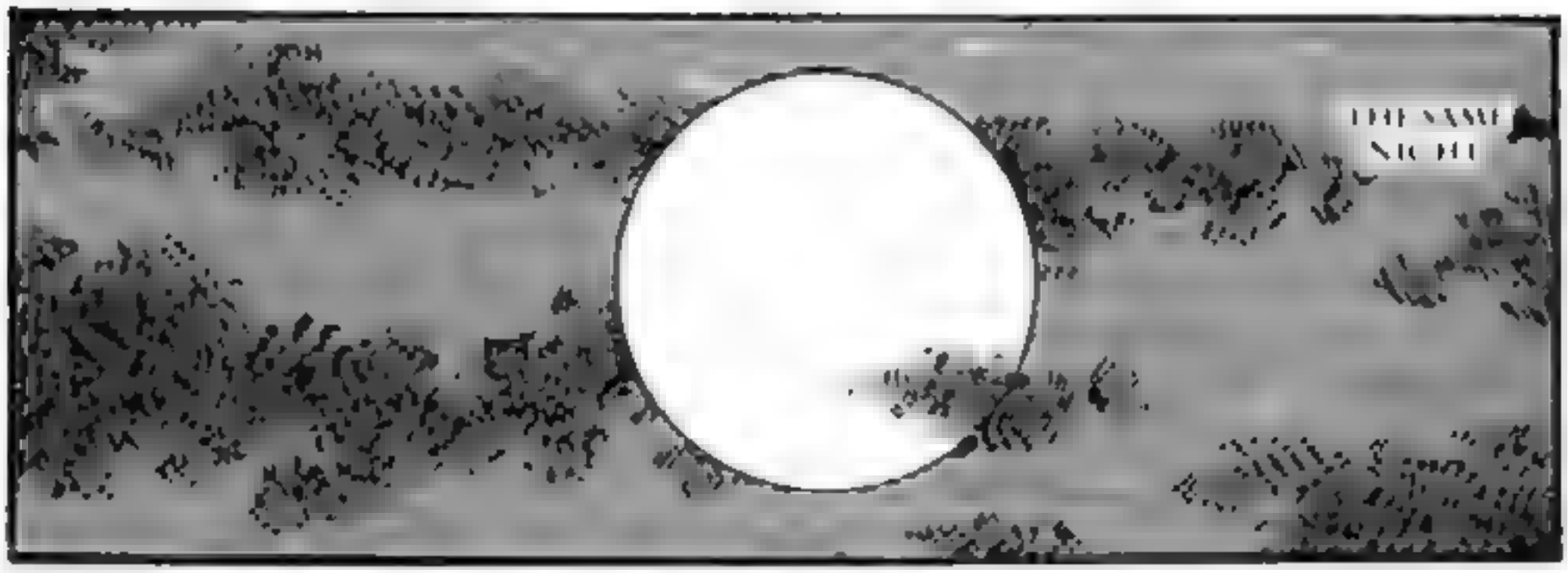
LU BU, YOU CAN SEE WHO SENT THESE ASSASSINS, DON'T YOU?

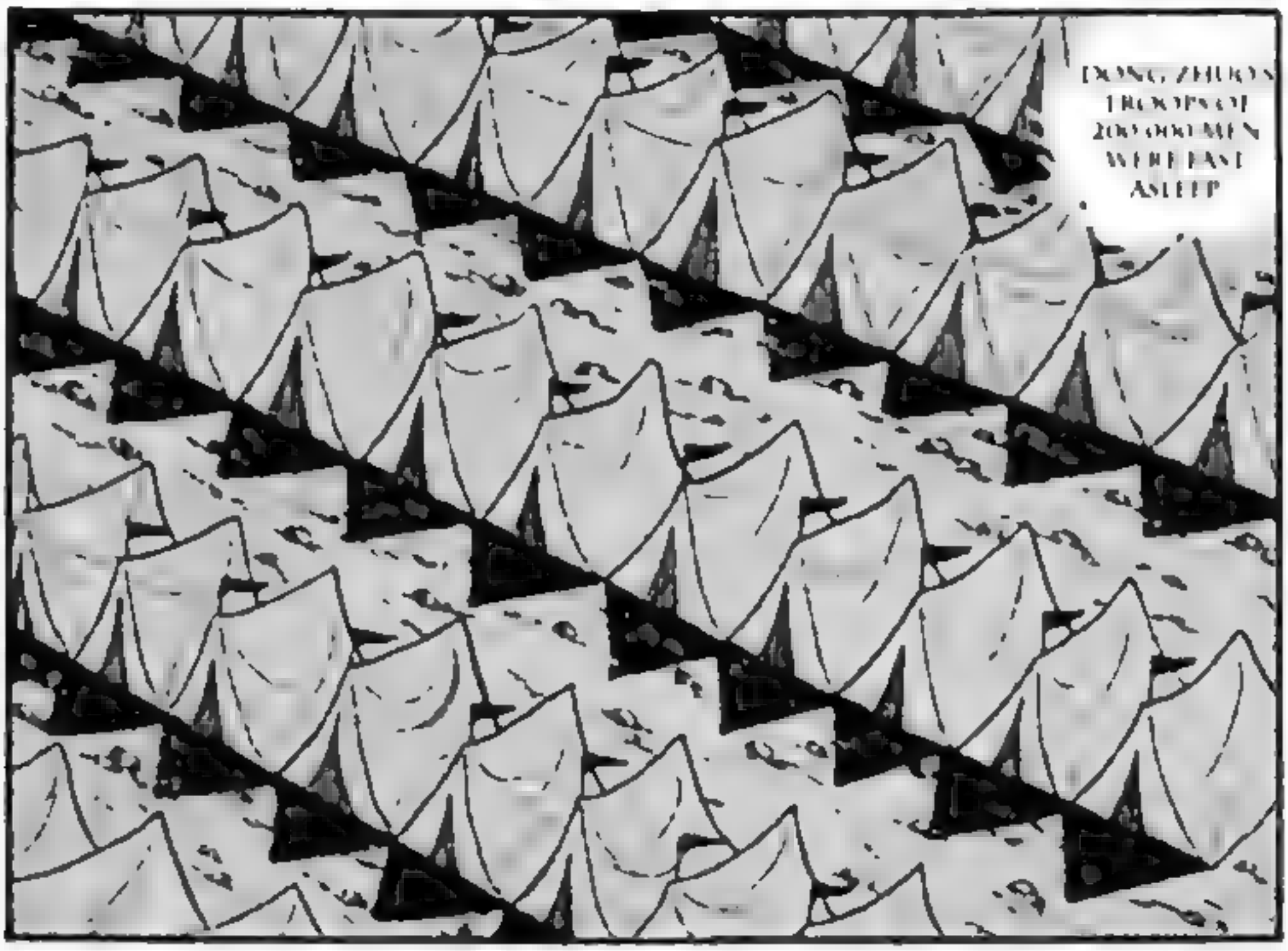
LU BU, LET US RETURN TO OUR BASE.

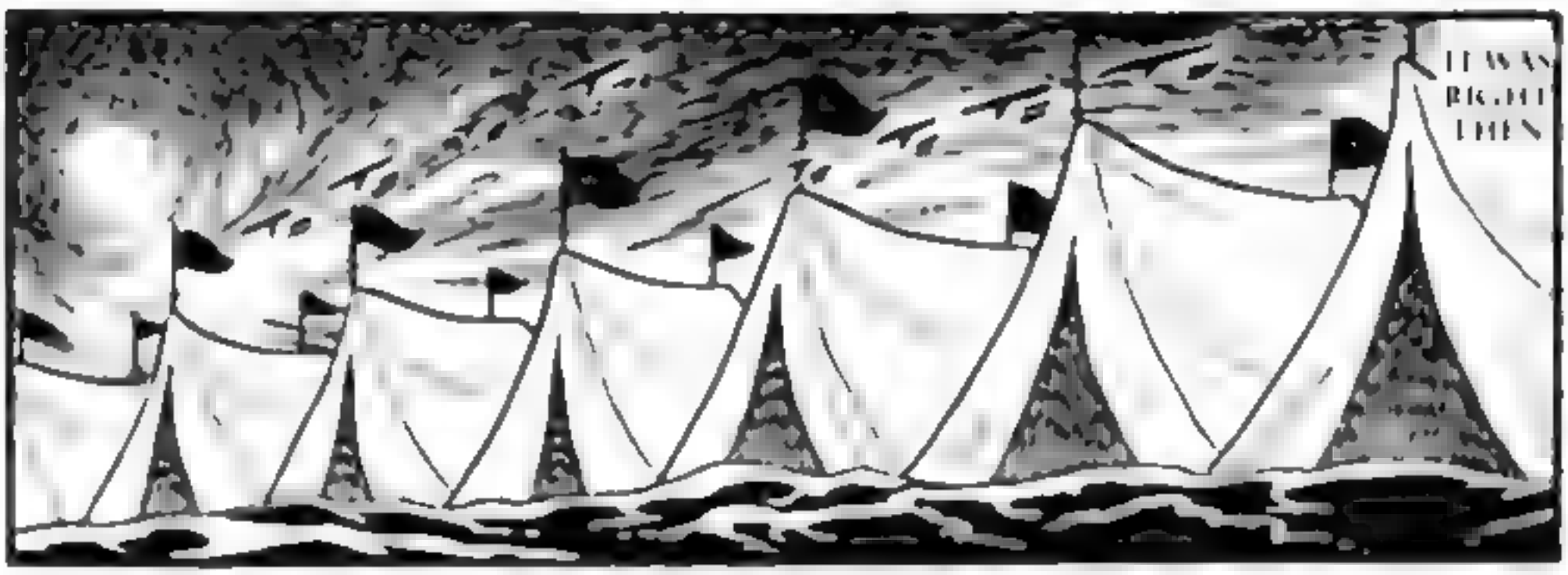




HE IS INDEED A MAN TO BE RECKONED WITH.
SEE GENERAL, THIS IS THE WORK OF THAT MAN LU BU.


THE SAME NIGHT


DONG ZHUO'S TROOPS OF 200,000 MEN WERE FAST ASLEEP


IT WAS RIGHT THEN

WHAT'S GOING ON?

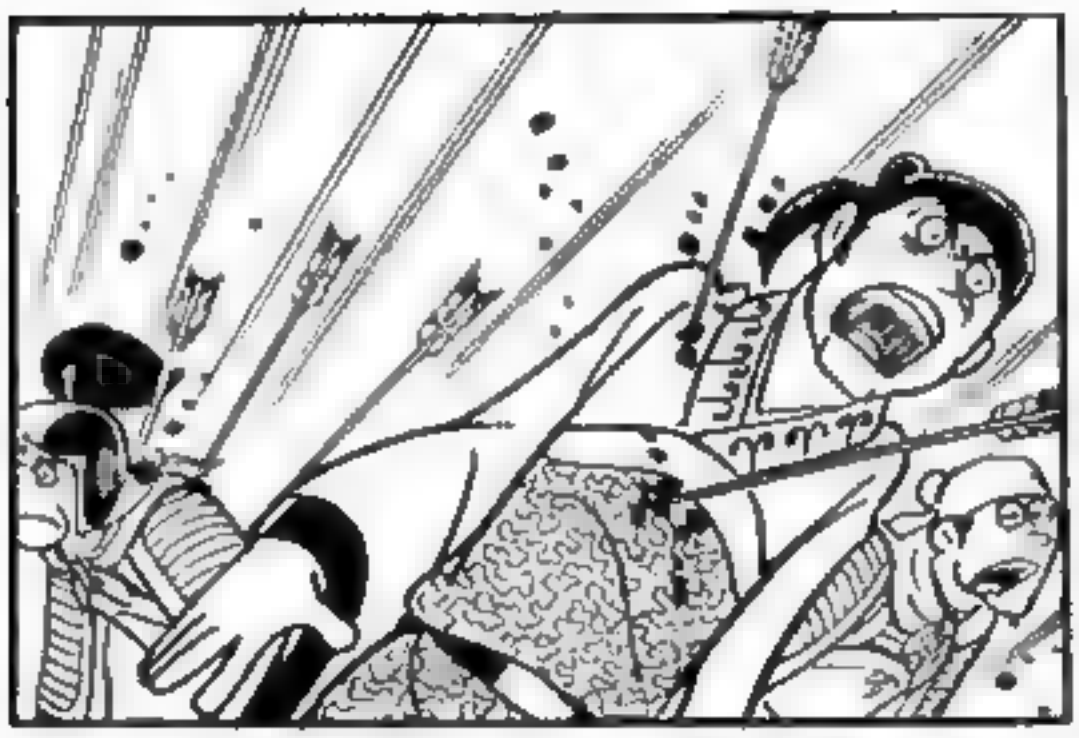
HORSE HOOF SOUNDS?

HMM?

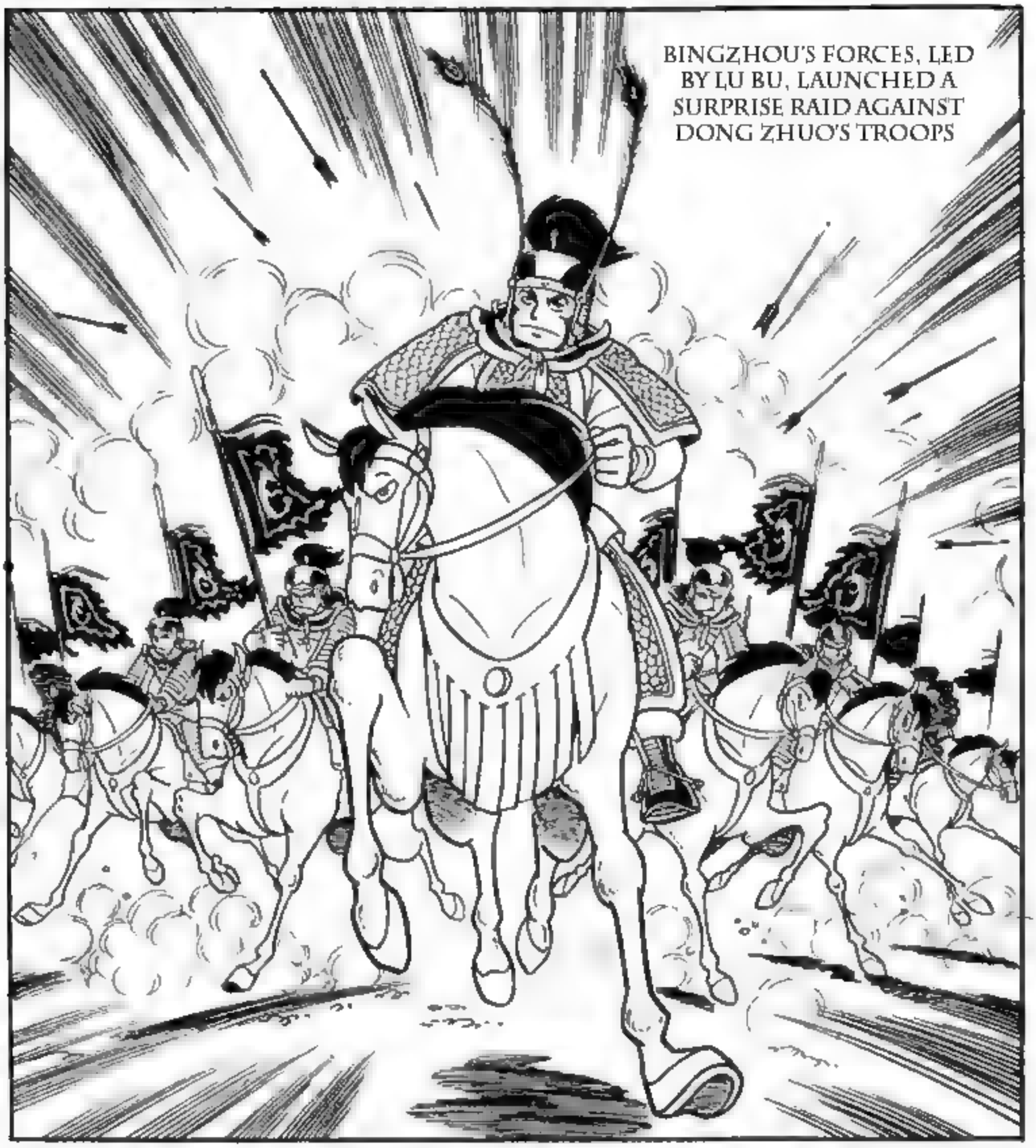
IT'S THE FLAG OF BINGZHOU'S TROOPS!

AH, THAT'S ...!

BINGZHOU'S TROOPS ARE ATTACKING US!!

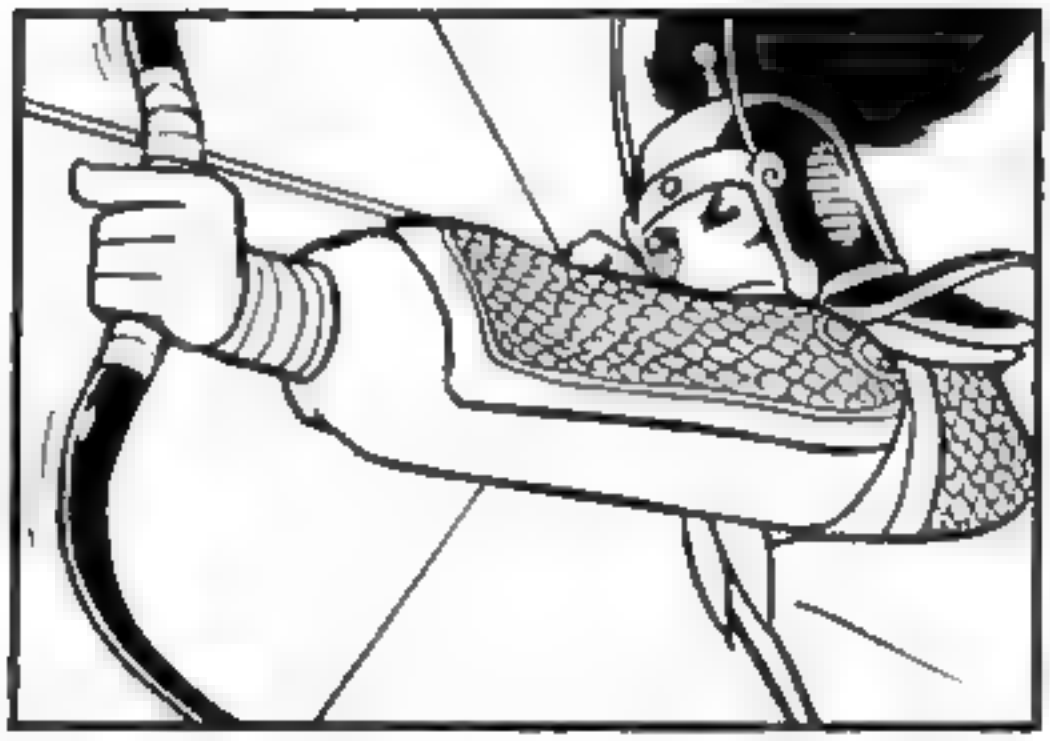


GUH!


BINGZHOU'S FORCES, LED BY LU BU, LAUNCHED A SURPRISE RAID AGAINST DONG ZHUO'S TROOPS

THOSE BAS-TARDS... JUST WHAT ARE THEY PLANNING!?

DON'T RUN AWAY! STAND UP AND FIGHT!



HMPH, WORTH-LESS TRASH!

RUN AWAY!

HE DIDN'T EVEN MISS A SINGLE SHOT SHOOTING FROM THAT FAR AWAY!

RED HARE

NNGGHHH... FIRST HE SPEAKS OUT AGAINST ME AND NOW HE DARES TO ATTACK MY MEN!?

WHAT! BINGZHOU'S FORCES ATTACKED MY MEN!?

GIVE ME MY ARMOUR AND PREPARE MY HORSE!

WE'VE BEEN UTTERLY DEFEATED. JUST WHAT WERE 200,000 OF MY MEN DOING!?

WHAT A SIGHT...

AHH!

I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU TO COME.
YOU MUST BE DONG ZHUO.

BECAUSE THE PEOPLE IN POWER ARE GREEDILY SCRAMBLING FOR THEIR OWN GAINS, THE CITIZENS ARE SUFFERING AND THIS COUNTRY HAS PLUNGED INTO CHAOS.

JUST LOOK AT YOUR OWN PITIFUL SELF! YOU HAVE ACHIEVED LITTLE ON YOUR OWN, AND DESPITE BEING A MERE GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU, YOU TRY TO TAKE OVER THE HAN COURT AND PALACE!

AND NOW YOU EVEN TRY TO DEPOSE THE EMPEROR AT YOUR OWN WHIM! THIS IS NONE OTHER THAN TREASON!

FOR THAT, I SHALL TAKE YOUR HEAD AND LEAVE IT OUT TO ROT IN THE STREETS OF LUOYANG AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT HAPPENS TO TRAITORS.

ATTACK!

GAHH!

GENERAL, YOU MUST ESCAPE AT ONCE!

AGHHH!

I WON'T LET YOU RUN AWAY!

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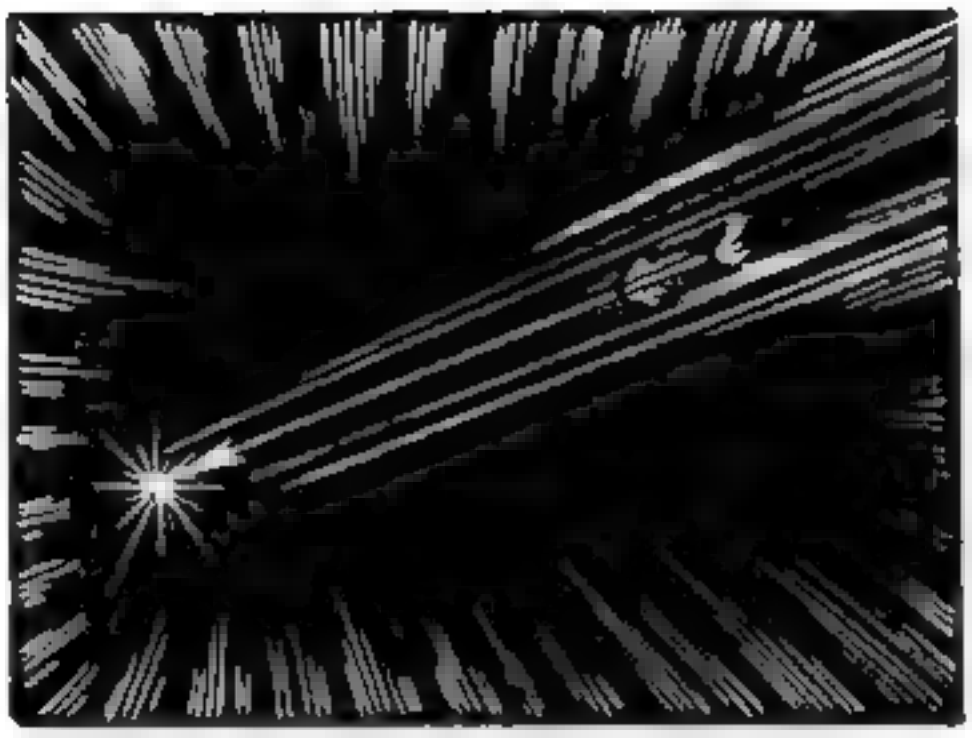
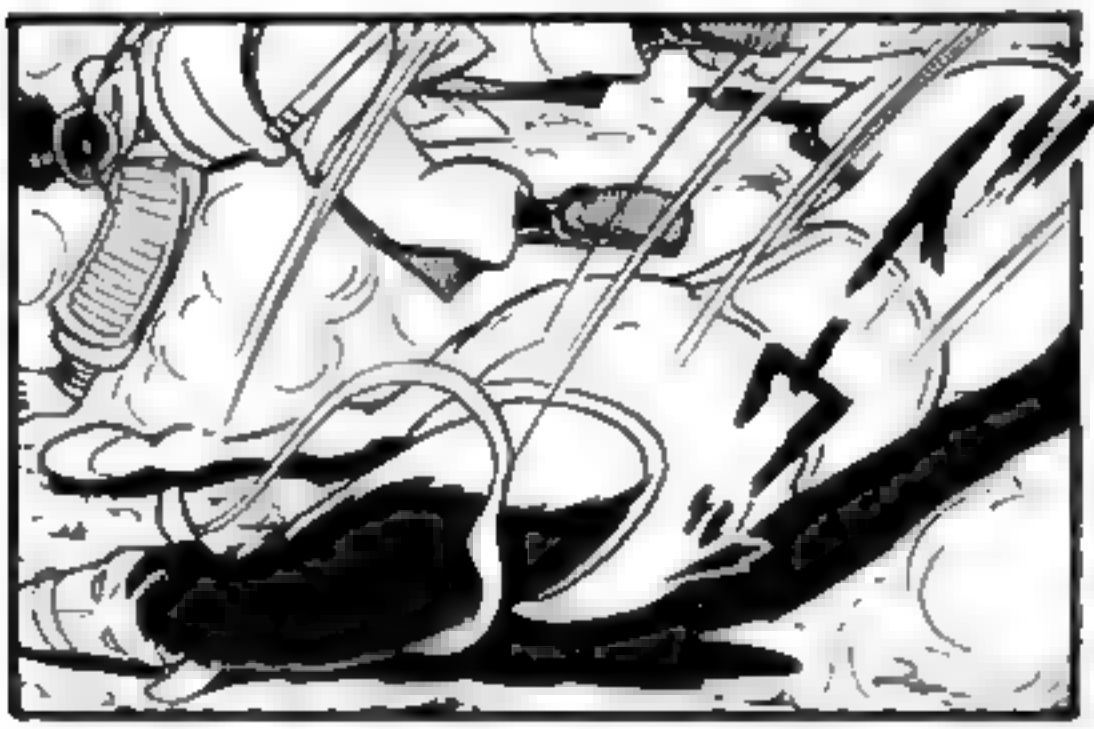
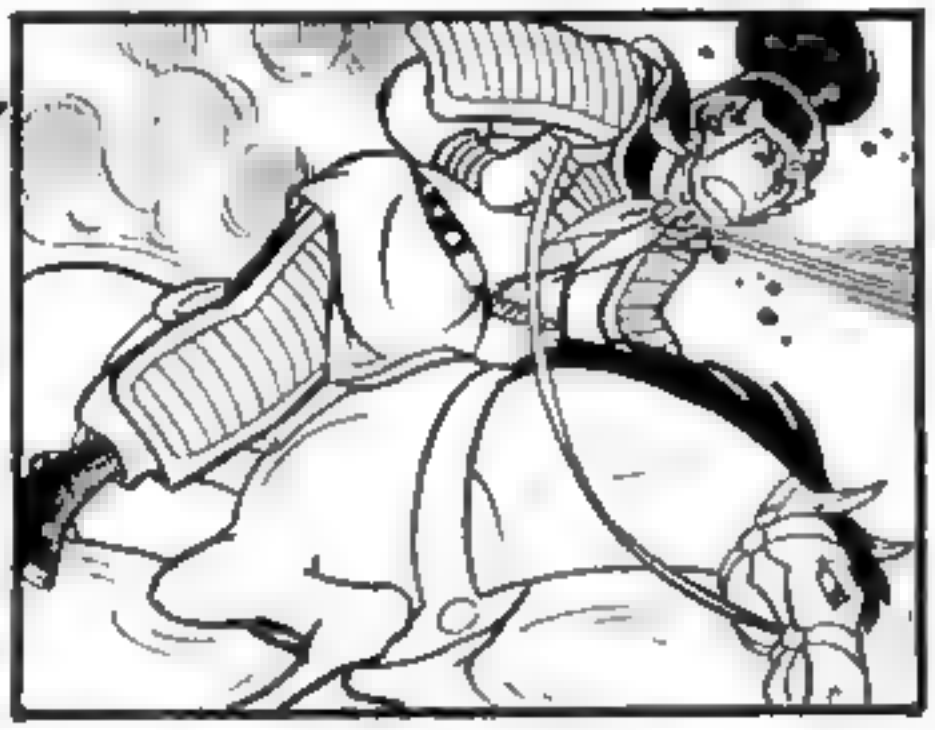




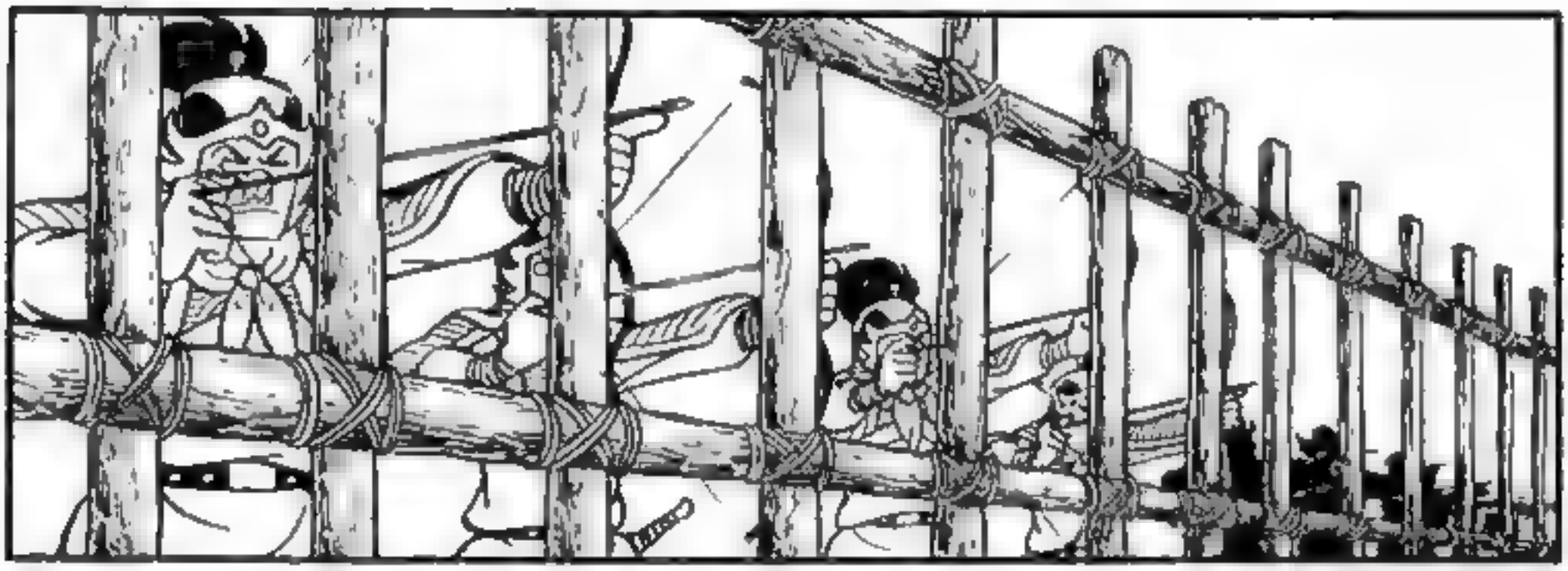


OUR REIN-FORCEMENTS ARE JUST UP AHEAD, GENERAL!
ACK! FASTER, YOU DAMN HORSE!

SHOOT! LET THEM FACE A RAIN OF ARROWS!!

GENERAL!

ARE YOU UNINJURED, GENERAL?



ALRIGHT, RETREAT!

DAMN, I MISSED MY CHANCE!

WHAT A TERRIFYING MAN HE IS...

AND WE CANNOT MATCH HIS ARCHERY SKILLS THAT CAN SNIPE OUR COMMANDERS EVEN A 100 FEET AWAY!

THE SOLDIERS JUST TURN TAIL AT THE MERE SIGHT OF HIM!

AS LONG AS THAT DING YUAN HAS LU BU BY HIS SIDE, WE SHALL NOT BE ABLE TO WIN.

GENERAL, THERE IS NO NEED TO BE SO FRUSTRATED.

IF I COULD SOMEHOW BRING HIM OVER TO MY SIDE THAN THIS ENTIRE COUNTRY WOULD BE MINE...

LU BU AND I SHARE THE SAME HOMETOWN. I OFTEN PLAYED WITH HIM AS A CHILD AND I KNOW HIS PERSONALITY VERY WELL.

OHH, LI SU. DO YOU HAVE SOME SORT OF A PLAN?

HMM...

LU BU MAY BE BRAVE BUT HE IS NOT TOO INTELLIGENT. IF YOU FLATTER HIM THE RIGHT WAY, YOU JUST MIGHT BE ABLE TO BRING HIM OVER TO YOUR SIDE, GENERAL.

Y-YOU MEAN THAT I HAVE TO GIVE UP MY MOST TREASURED HORSE!?

I SUGGEST SIR TO OFFER YOUR BELOVED RED HARE AND SOME GOLD AND SILVER. I SHALL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.

RED HARE
THE RED HARE WAS A FAMOUS HORSE WITH DEEP RED FUR AND WAS SAID TO BE ABLE TO RUN A 1000 LI IN ONE DAY WHEN IT RAN. ITS RED MANE FLUTTERING WITH THE WIND MADE IT LOOK AS IF IT WERE ON FIRE.

*1000LI IS OVER 400KM

I AM LI SU. TELL LU BU THAT I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR HIM.

HALT! WHOM GOES FORTH!?

WHAT IS IT?

SIR!

ALRIGHT, WAIT JUST A MOMENT.

LI SU...!?

A MAN CALLED LI SU IS HERE TO DELIVER A MESSAGE TO YOU.

HELLO LU BU, IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE WE LAST MET.

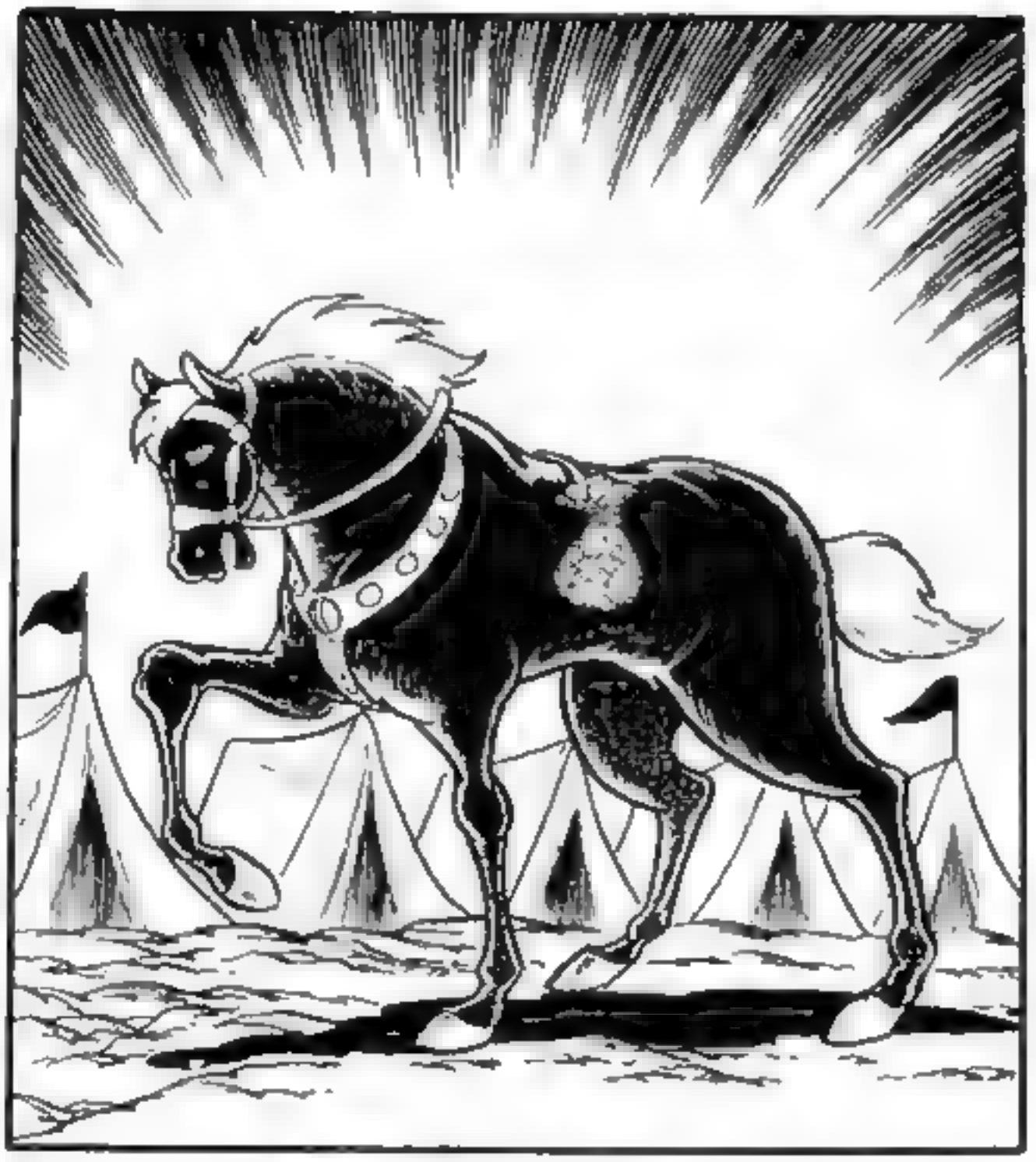
OHH! LI SU!

HMM?

PLEASE, COME INSIDE. LET ME AT LEAST TREAT YOU TO A DRINK.

WHAT A MAGNIFI-CENT HORSE!

THIS IS THE FAMOUS RED HARE.



YOU'RE REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT GIVING ME THIS SPLENDID HORSE!?

I BROUGH IT HERE TO GIVE IT TO YOU.

TO RECEIVE SUCH A THING FROM YOU... I DON'T KNOW HOW TO REPAY YOU MY GRATITUDE!
I'VE HEARD THE RUMORS BUT TRULY HOW MAGNFICENT IT IS!!

I MAY HAVE GIVEN YOU THE RED HARE BUT I WONDER IF YOU CAN RIDE IT...

?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

THIS IS JUST OUR ENCAMPMENT SO I DO NOT HAVE MUCH TO OFFER, BUT PLEASE, HAVE A DRINK.

YOU SHOULD ALREADY KNOW THAT MY FATHER HAS PASSED AWAY LONG AGO.

MY FATHER ...?

WELL, THE RED HARE IS AN EXTREMELY TREASURED HORSE. ONCE YOUR FATHER HEARS ABOUT IT, WON'T HE ASK YOU TO GIVE IT TO HIM?

BUT IT'S A SHAME THAT A MAN OF SUCH HIGH CALIBER LIKE YOU IS BEING TREATED LIKE A DOCILE LAMB BY DING YUAN NOWADAYS...

NO, I MEAN YOUR NEW FATHER, DING YUAN.

I SEE... SO EVEN A GALLANT WARRIOR LIKE YOU IS QUIETLY SPENDING HIS DAYS...

HAHA... BUT DING YUAN WAS THE ONE WHO TOOK CARE OF ME SINCE MY FATHER'S DEATH. IT IS NOT RIGHT OF ME TO SPEAK OF SUCH THINGS...

LI SU, WHO DO YOU THINK THE REAL HERO OF THIS AGE IS?

YES I'M SURE. IN FACT, IF YOU JUST HAD A SUITABLE CHANCE, I'M SURE YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE A NAME FOR YOURSELF.

WELL OF COURSE, I DID ONCE HAVE ASPIRATIONS OF SPREADING MY NAME AS A WARRIOR THROUGHOUT THE LAND WHEN I WAS YOUNGER.

DONG ZHUO!?

WELL OF COURSE WOULD THAT NOT BE GENERAL DONG ZHUO?

HMM...

HE HAS POWER AND IS KIND TO HIS SUBORDINATES. IT IS NO WONDER WHY THE PEOPLE ARE FLOCKING TO SERVE HIM.

THAT'S WHAT MAKES HIM STAND OUT ABOVE THE REST.

DONG ZHUO CARES NOT FOR SUCH TRIVIAL DETAILS LIKE THAT.

IN FACT, IT WAS I WHO ATTACKED HIS TROOPS JUST AWHILE AGO.

BUT HE AND I ARE JUST STRANGERS AND MY FATHER AND HE ARE IN BAD RELATIONS.

WHAT!?

IN FACT, THE RED HARE AND THIS BAG OF GOLD AND SILVER WERE GIVEN TO ME TO DELIVER TO YOU BY GENERAL DONG ZHUO, WHO WAS IMPRESSED BY YOUR SKILLS AS A WARRIOR.

YES, EXACTLY. THAT'S THE KIND OF MAN DONG ZHUO IS AND WHY HE WILL BE A MAJOR FIGURE IN THE HAN COURT SOON ENOUGH.

EVEN THOUGH I TRIED TO KILL HIM, THAT MAN DID WHAT...!?

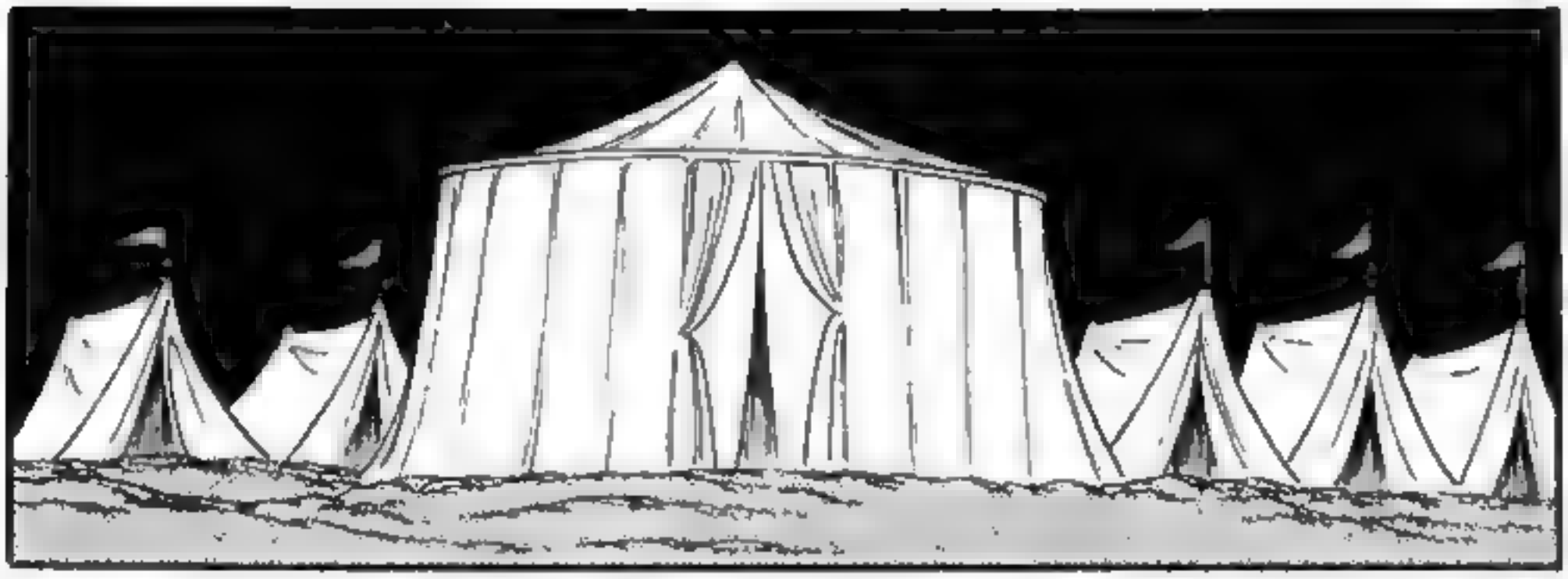
OR TO SERVE UNDER THE FAMOUS DONG ZHUO AND MAKE A NAME FOR YOURSELF... IF YOUR ANSWER IS THE LATTER THEN...

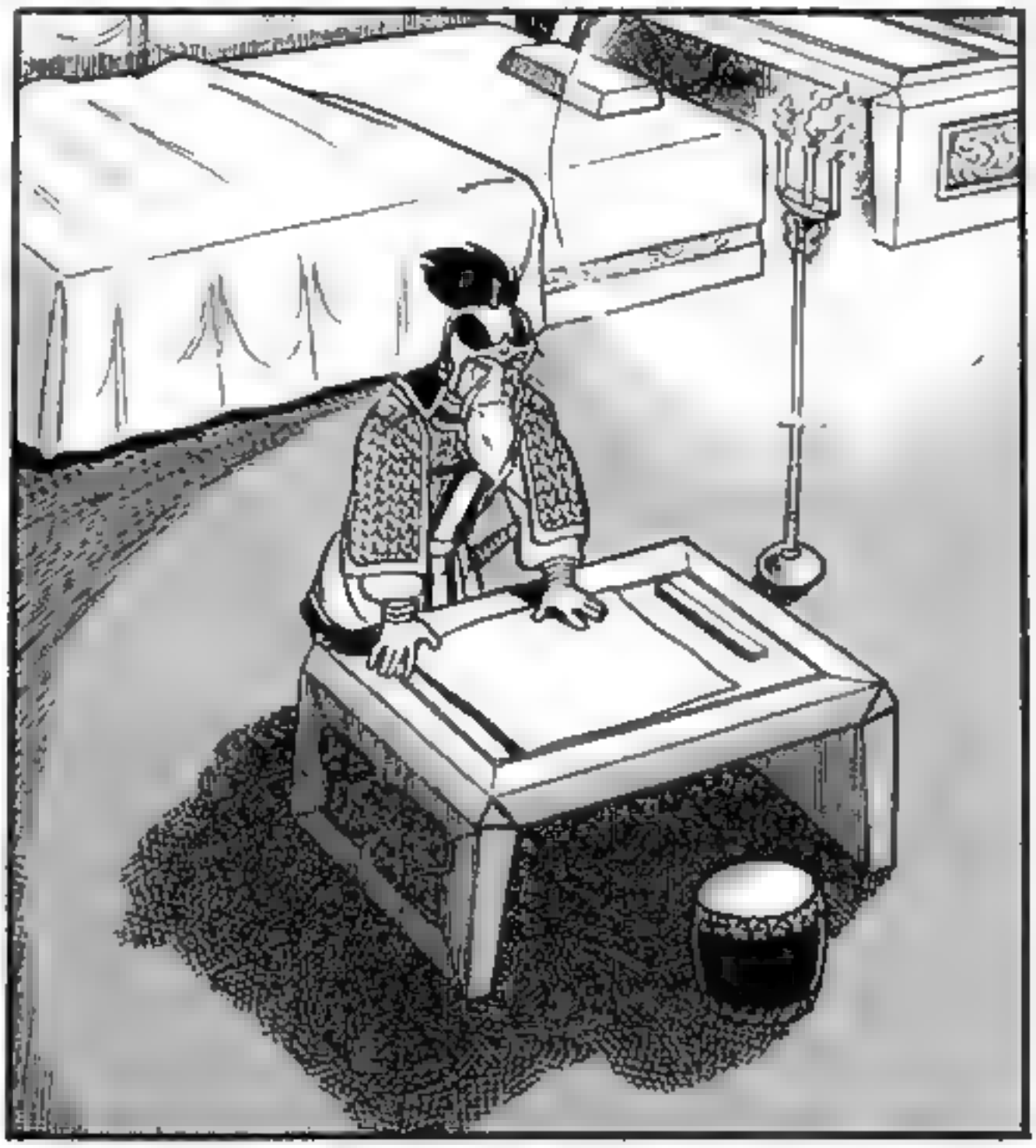
DO YOU REALLY WISH TO LIVE OUT THE REST OF YOUR DAYS QUIETLY IN SOME PROVINCE...?

WHAT!?

WHISPER WHISPER

I SHALL SIT HERE AND FINISH DRINKING THIS WINE AS YOU MAKE YOUR DECISION. I SUGGEST YOU MAKE YOUR CHOICE BEFORE I LEAVE...





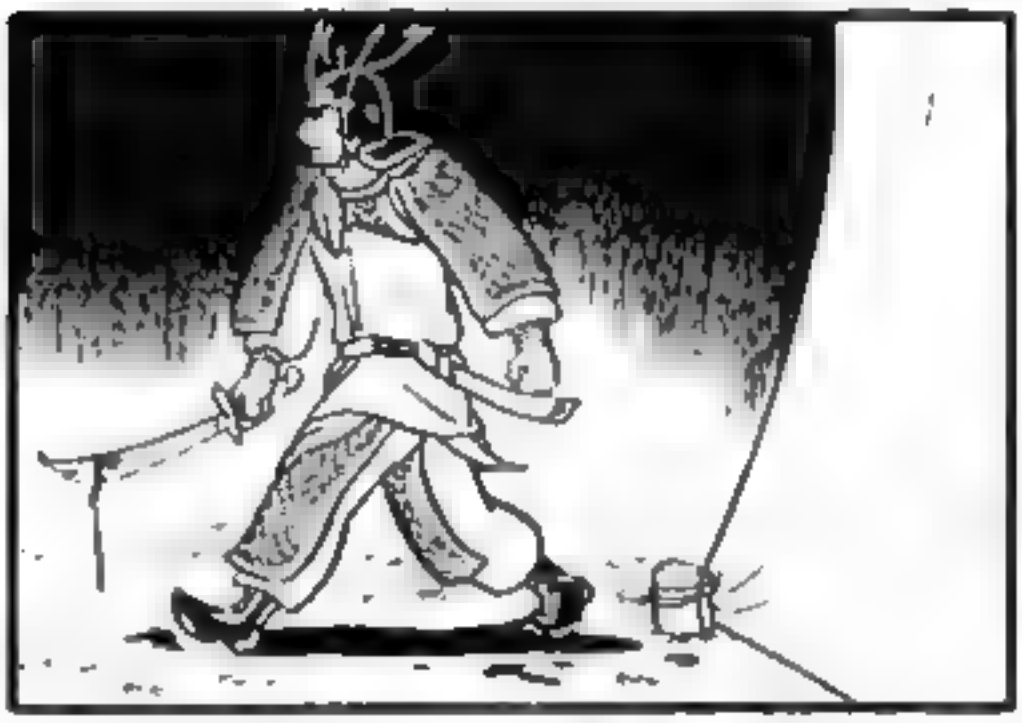
WHAT IS IT, ARE YOU FEELING UNWELL? YOU LOOK A LITTLE PALE...

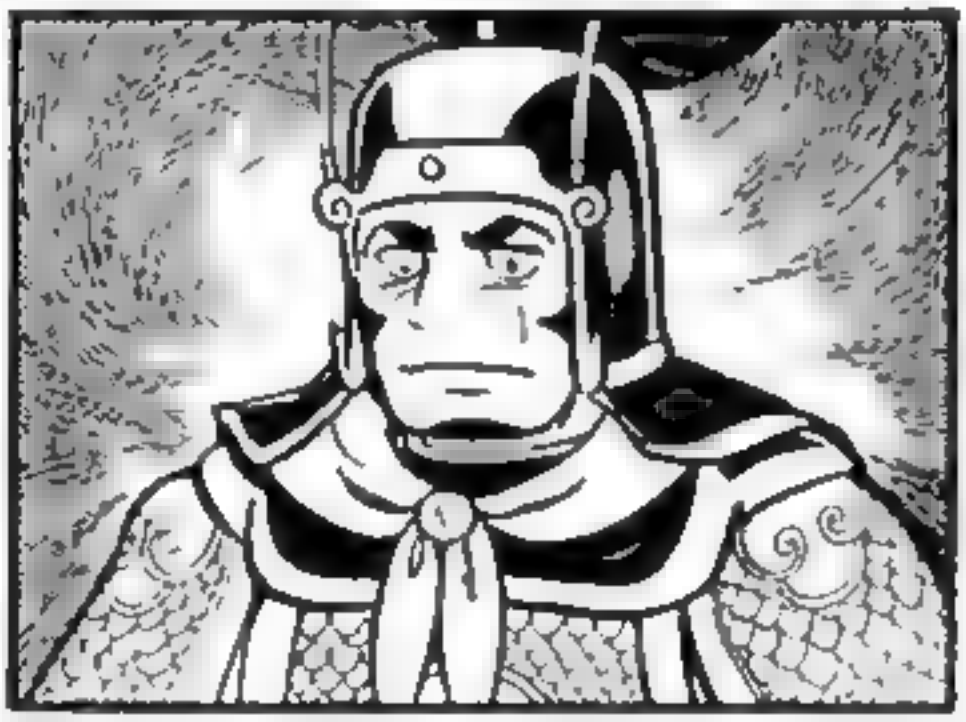
AH, LU BU.

WHAT! HAVE YOU GONE MAD, LU BU?

I AM GRATEFUL FOR YOU TAKING CARE OF ME UNTIL NOW BUT I'M AFRAID YOU MUST DIE HERE.

LU BU!!
I WISH TO MAKE A NAME FOR MYSELF IN THIS WORLD!



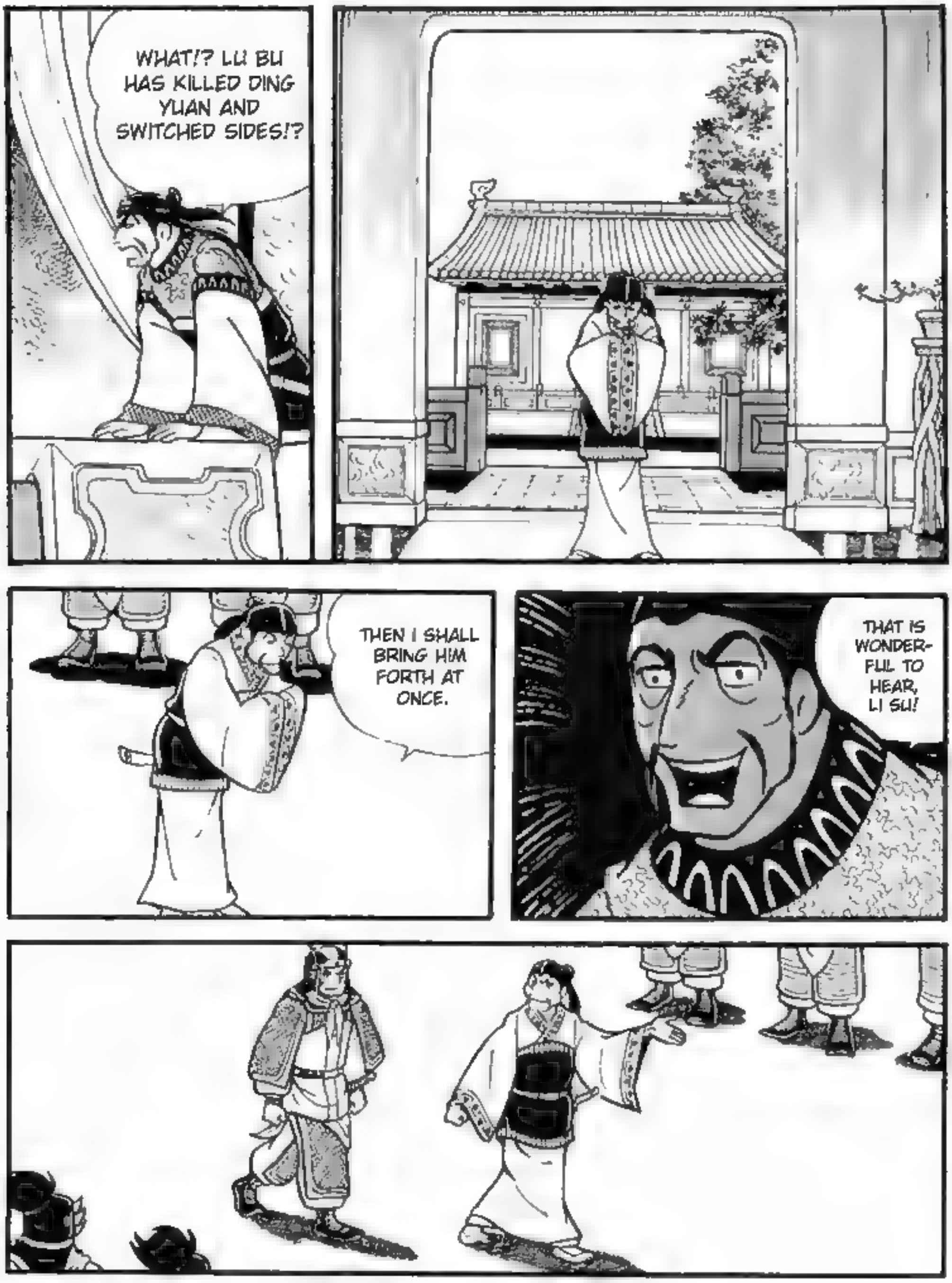


ALRIGHT MEN, LISTEN UP! I HAVE SLAIN DING YUAN!

BUT IF YOU STILL SEEK TO BE BY MY SIDE, THEN FOLLOW ME!

IF YOU HAVE ANY COM-PLAINTS, THEN I SUGGEST YOU LEAVE!

THE TYRANNICAL GENERAL



BRING THE GOLDEN ARMOR!

OHH, I AM DELIGHTED TO SEE THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO SERVE UNDER ME.

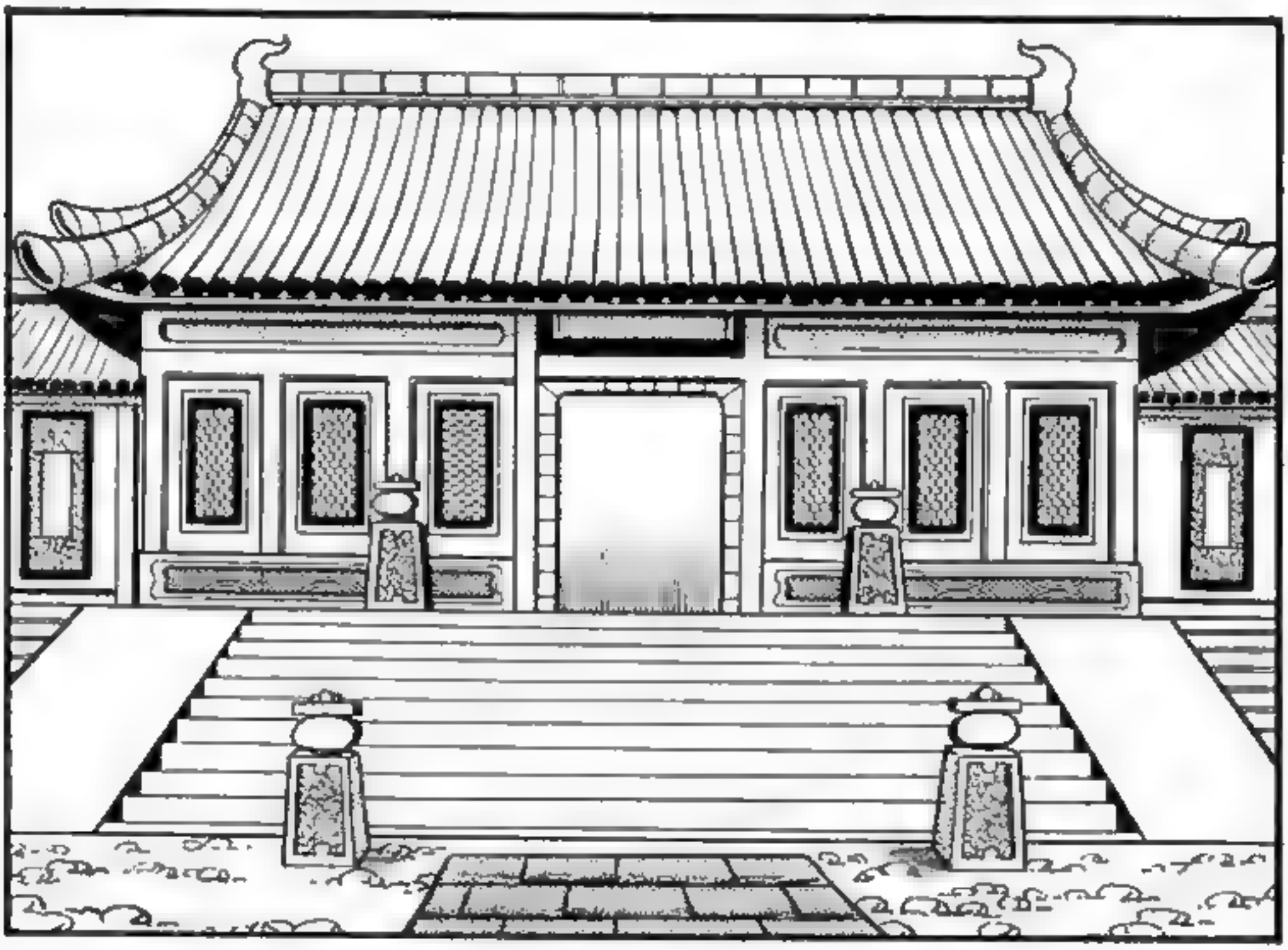
BUT SIR HAS ALREADY PRESENTED ME WITH THE RED HARE AND A BAG OF GOLD AND SILVER...

HERE IS ANOTHER TOKEN OF MY GRATITUDE.

I AM OVERJOYED BY YOUR GRACIOUSNESS. I WILL DO MY BEST TO BE OF USE TO YOU, GENERAL.

WITH THIS, THERE IS NOW NO ONE WHO DARES TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST ME. SO LET US MAKE PRINCE OF CHENLIU THE RIGHTFUL EMPEROR OF HAN!

HAHAHA. LET US GO TO THE PALACE AND CARRY OUT OUR PLAN AT ONCE.



WE HAVE COME TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE CURRENT EMPEROR IS UNFIT FOR RULE AND THUS, PRINCE OF CHENLIU SHOULD SUCCEED THE THRONE.

GENERAL DONG ZHUO, FOR WHAT BUSINESS HAVE YOU COME TO THE PALACE?

READ THE PROCLA-MATION!

WHAT!

HE CANNOT POSSI-BLY BRING PEACE TO THESE TROU-BLED TIMES AND AS SUCH...

THE CURRENT EMPEROR IS NOT FIT TO BE THE EMPEROR FOR HE IS NOT WISE AND DOES NOT KNOW OF PROPER MANNERS NOR OF HOW TO TREAT HIS SUBJECTS. THUS, WE CANNOT RECOGNIZE HIM AS OUR EMPEROR.

YOU DARE TO CHANGE THE EMPEROR TO YOUR OWN WHIMS!?

YOU INSOLENT TRAITORS!

WHA...

DONG ZHUO...!

YOU TRAITOROUS SCUM...

ドニ

AHHHH!

SOME-
ONE!

IT SEEMS NO
ONE ELSE
OBJECTS.

TAKE THESE TWO
AWAY AT ONCE!

ALRIGHT THEN,
FROM TODAY
FORTH, PRINCE OF
CHENLIU IS OUR
EMPEROR!

KYAA!

COME!

ちんぎろ

ちんぎろ

BRING PRINCE CHENLIU HERE.

YES, SIR.

PRINCE XIE OF CHEN-LIU, FROM TODAY FORTH, YOU WILL BE THE NEW EMPEROR OF HAN.

WORRY NOT, YOUR MAJESTY. IF THERE IS ANYBODY WHO OBJECTS TO THIS CHANGE, I SHALL TAKE CARE OF THEM PERSONALLY.

EVERYONE! SWEAR YOUR ALLEGIANCE TO THE NEW EMPEROR!

AHAHAHA! THE WINE TASTES EVEN BETTER NOW THAT THIS KINGDOM IS WITHIN THE PALM OF MY HANDS!

HMM?

POUR ME ANOTHER GLASS.

AH, LI RU. WHY DON'T YOU COME AND HAVE A DRINK WITH ME?

I HAVE AN IMPORTANT MATTER TO DISCUSS, GENERAL. IF YOU'D JUST CLEAR AWAY THE SERVANTS...

AS YOU WISH. SERVANTS, LEAVE THE ROOM.

ALTHOUGH LIU BIAN HAS BEEN DEPOSED, THERE ARE STILL MANY WHO SIDE WITH HIM AND EMPRESS HE.

IT IS ABOUT EMPRESS HE AND THE NOW DEPOSED EMPEROR LIU BIAN.

WHAT IS IT, THEN?

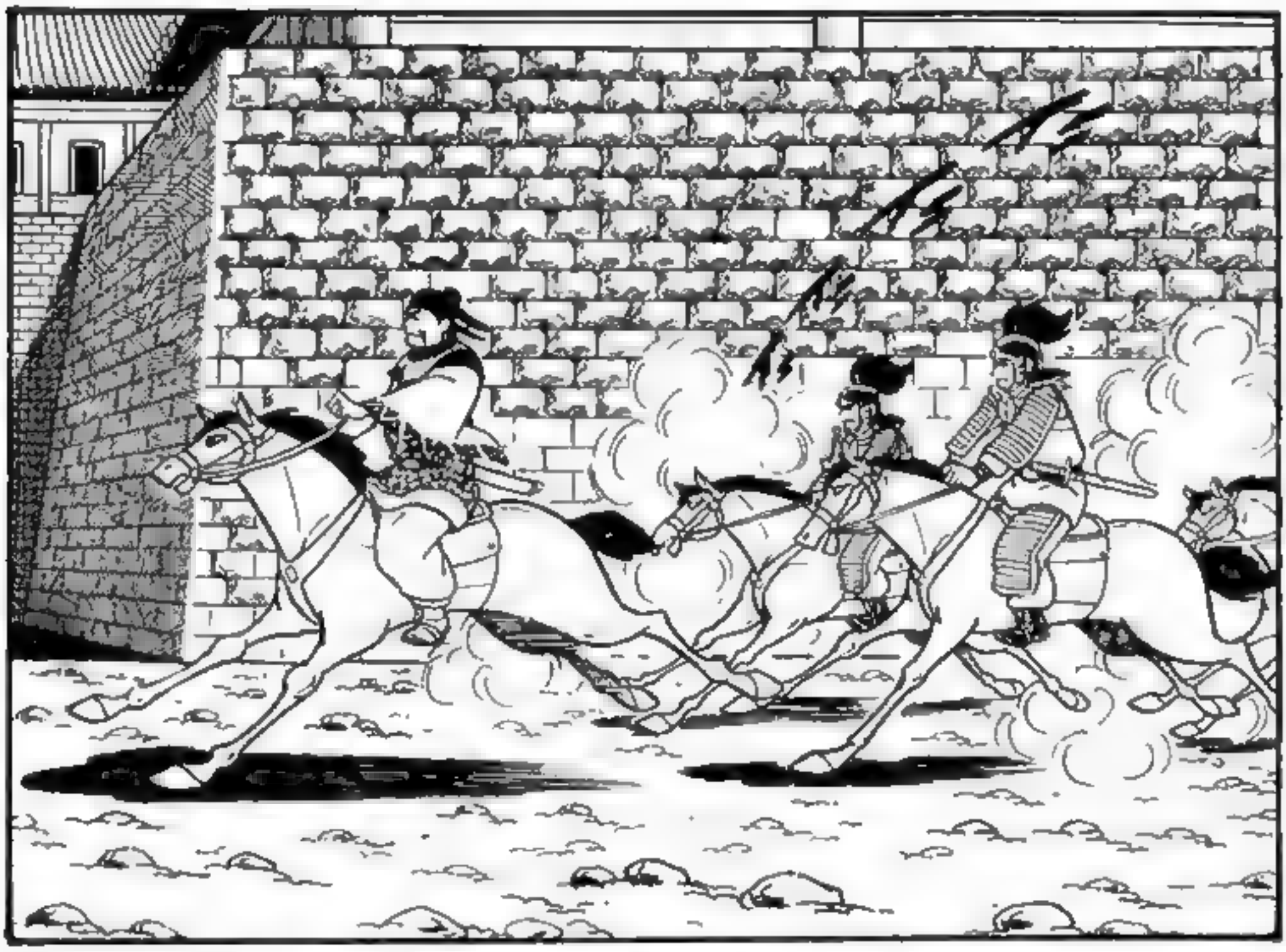
THERE MIGHT BE MEN WHO WILL SIDE WITH THEM AND PLOT FOR MY DOWNFALL.

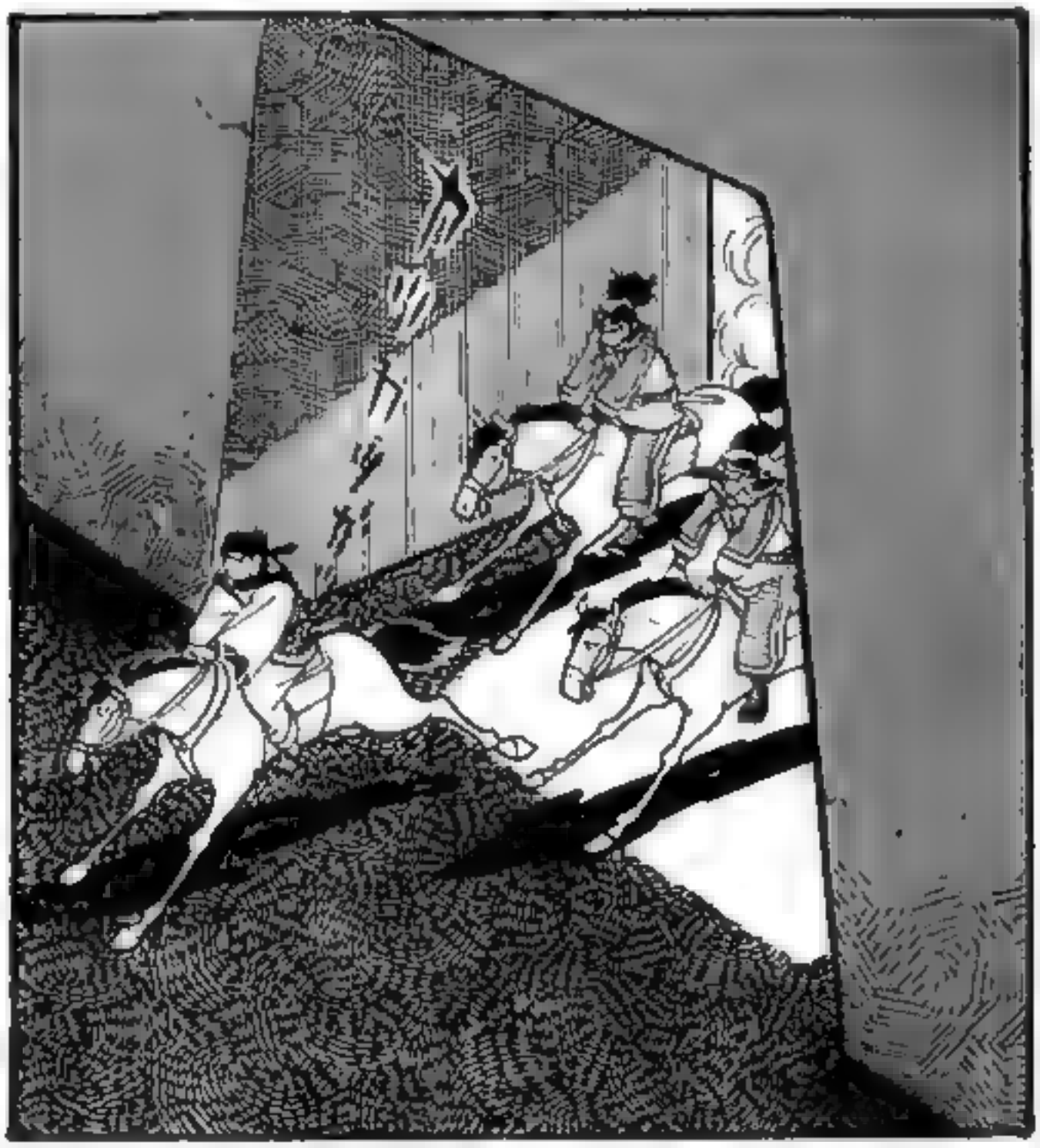
HMM, YOU BRING UP A GOOD POINT.

IF SIR LEAVES THIS SITUATION ALONE, IT MAY CAUSE RATHER LARGE PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE...

YES, SIR.

I SEE. ALLOWING THEM TO LIVE ANY LONGER WILL BE A THREAT TO ME IN THE FUTURE. THEN I ORDER YOU TO GO AND KILL THEM.





JUST WAIT RIGHT HERE MEN.

I HAVE BEEN ASKED BY GENERAL DONG ZHUO TO PRESENT YOU WITH THIS WINE TO FORGET YOUR TROUBLES ON THIS FINE SPRING DAY.
AND WHAT IS YOUR BUSI-NESS, LI RU?

THERE IS NO WAY DONG ZHUO WOULD BE KIND ENOUGH TO DO SUCH A THING. THAT IS SURELY POISONED.

PLEASE, HAVE A DRINK.

ARE YOU REFUSING THE WINE THAT DONG ZHUO MADE SPECIALLY JUST FOR YOU?

HAHA.

WHY DON'T YOU DRINK IT FIRST TO SHOW ME THAT THE WINE IS NOT POISONED, THEN?

IF SO, THEN YOU MUST TAKE THIS DAGGER.

YOU TRAITORS! HEAVEN WILL ASSURE THAT YOUR DOWN-FALL WILL NOT BE FAR.

I SHALL PRETEND I NEVER HEARD THAT. NOW CHOOSE.

I MERELY ASK YOU TO CHOOSE AN OPTION.

ARE YOU TELLING US TO COMMIT SUICIDE!?

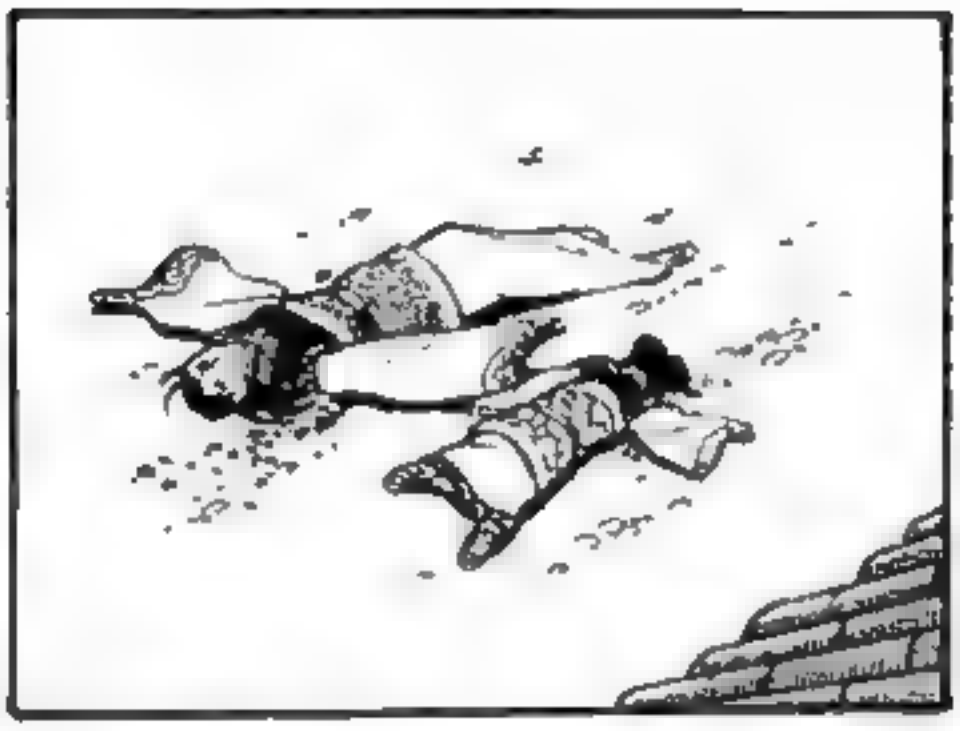
IF YOU WILL NOT MAKE A CHOICE, THEN I SHALL TAKE MATTERS INTO MY OWN HANDS.

MY BROTHER WAS A FOOL FOR LETTING YOU BEASTS INSIDE THE CAPITAL...

AGHHH!

SOMEONE!
HELP!!

HAHAHA.

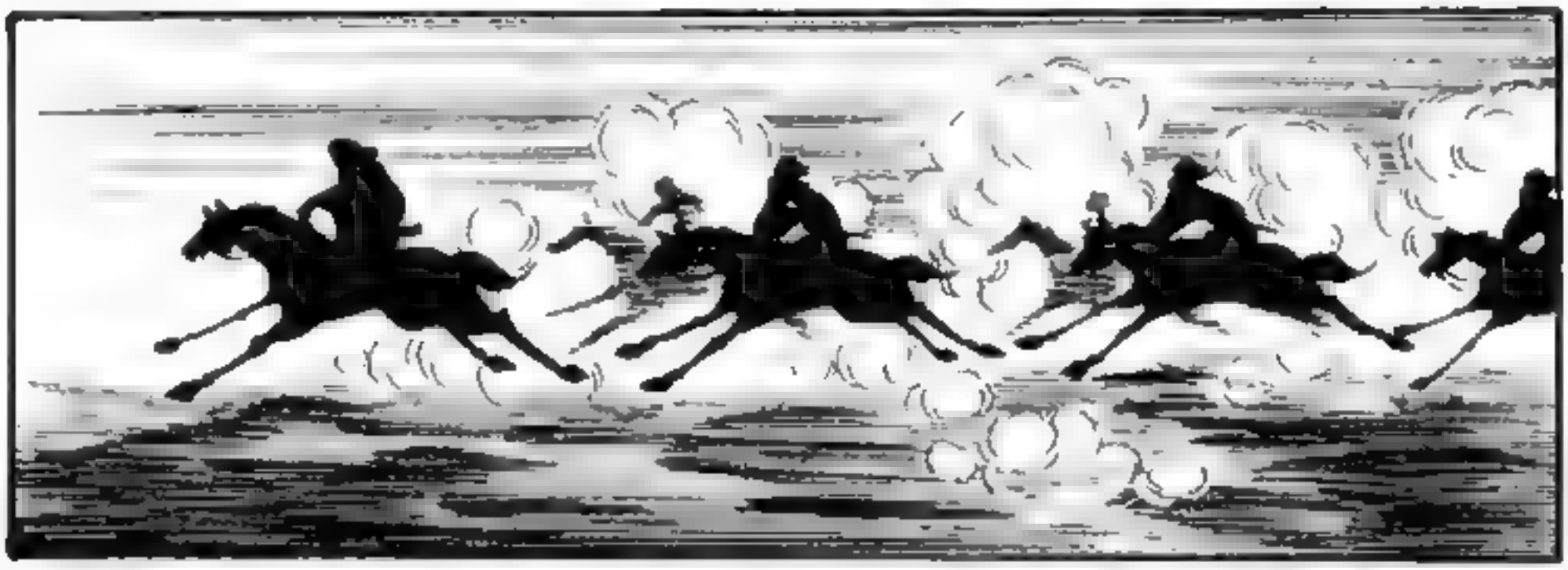


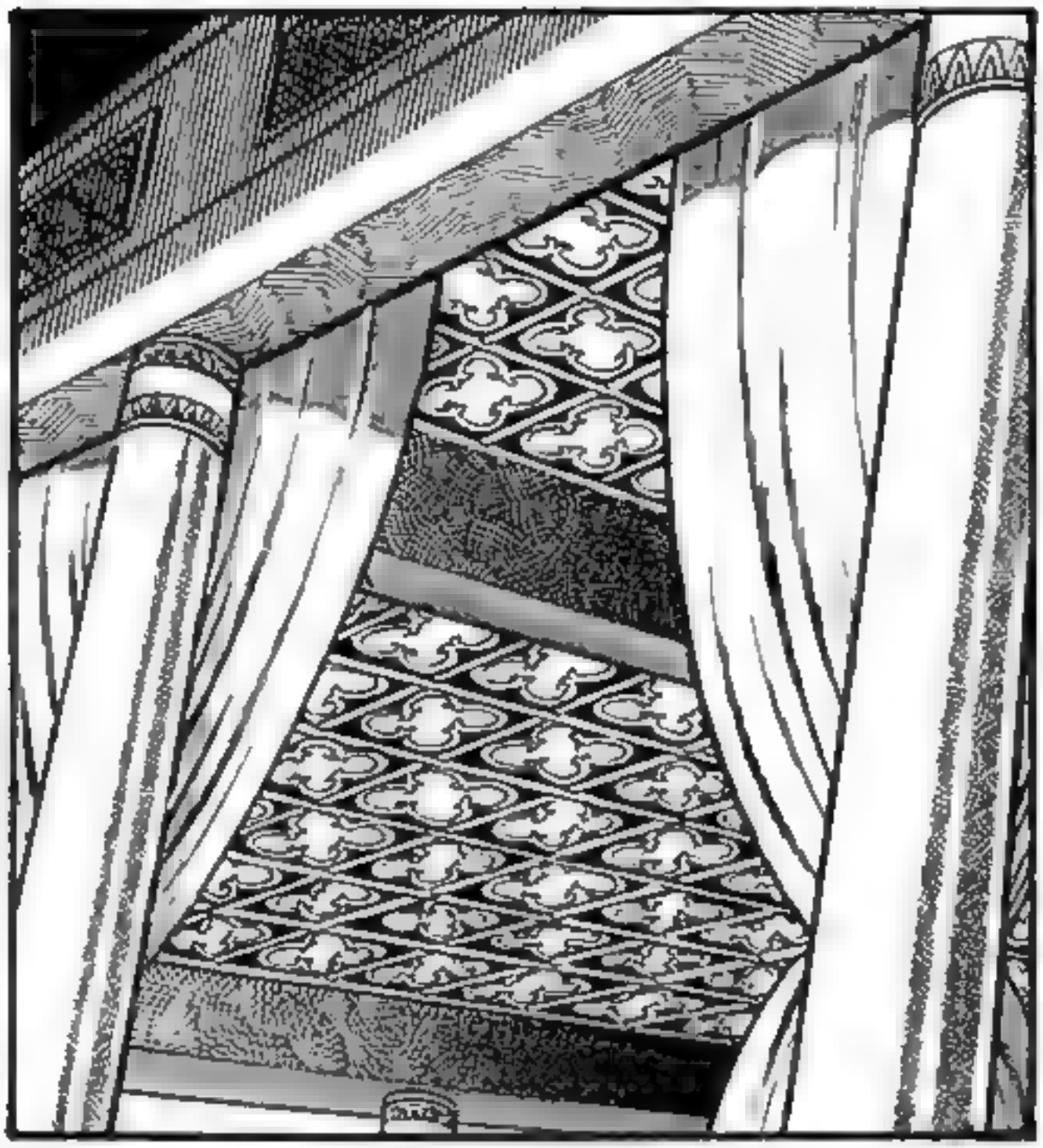
ALRIGHT, PRINCE LIU BIAN AND EMPRESS HE HAVE BEEN TAKEN CARE OF. GO INSIDE AND TAKE CARE OF THE REST.

KYAAA!

W-WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS!?

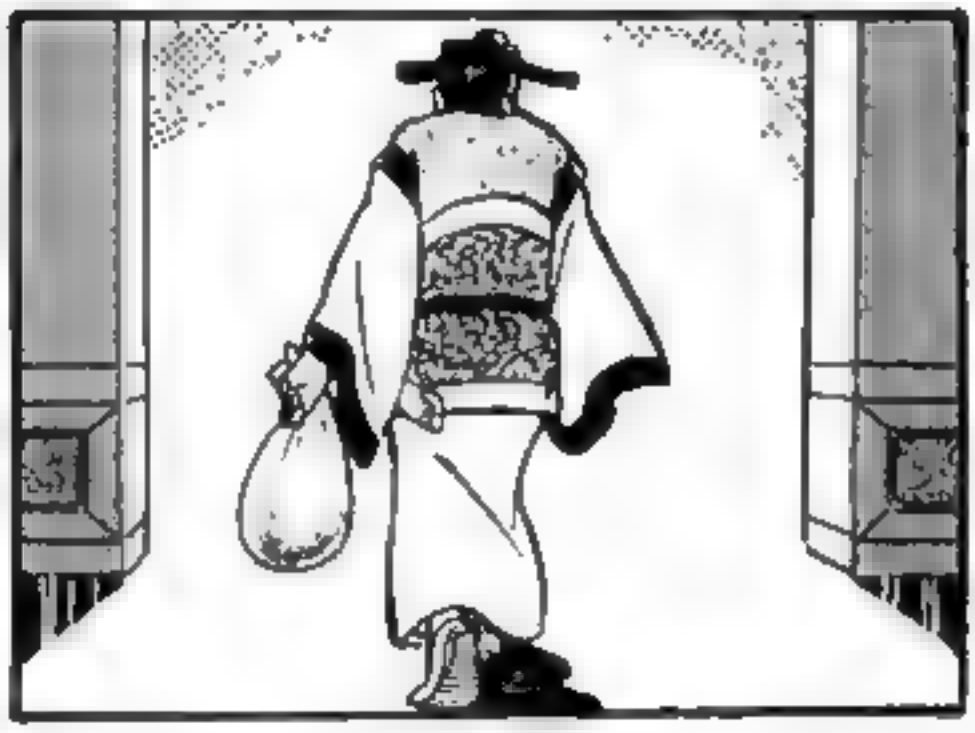
GOOD, LET US HEAD BACK.





YES, SIR.
YES, I CAN SEE CLEARLY. YOU'RE MAKING THE WINE TASTE BAD, GO BURY THEM SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE THE CASTLE.

BUT IN ANY CASE, WITH THIS, THIS COUNTRY IS COMPLETELY UNDER MY CONTROL.



PREPARE MY CHARIOT.

THAT SOUNDS DELIGHTFUL, GENERAL.

WHY DON'T WE GO FLOWER VIEWING TO FRESHEN UP OUR MOODS?

AHAHA! BEHOLD MY DRIVING SKILLS!

ALL THIS LAND THAT STRETCHES OUT ENDLESSLY NOW BELONGS TO ME!

FASTER! RUN FASTER HORSES! HAHA!

ドドド ドドド

HMM?

ガ〜ラガラ

JUST WHAT KIND OF A VILLAGE IS THIS!?

WHAT IS THIS?

?
?

I SHALL ARREST YOU ALL TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW I TREAT INDOLENCE!

WHY ARE PEOPLE DRESSED IN THEIR BEST CLOTHES ON THIS SUNNY DAY AND NOT EVEN WORKING!? A BUNCH OF LAZY SLOTHS THEY ARE!

SIR, I AM AFRAID YOU ARE MISTAKEN. TODAY IS THE DAY OF OUR VILLAGE FESTIVAL THAT COMES JUST ONCE A YEAR.

GAHH!

SILENCE! I SHALL NOT HEAR OF YOU PATHETIC EXCUSES!

PLEASE FORGIVE US...

TIE HER TO THE OXEN.

GENERAL, WHAT SHALL I DO WITH HER!?

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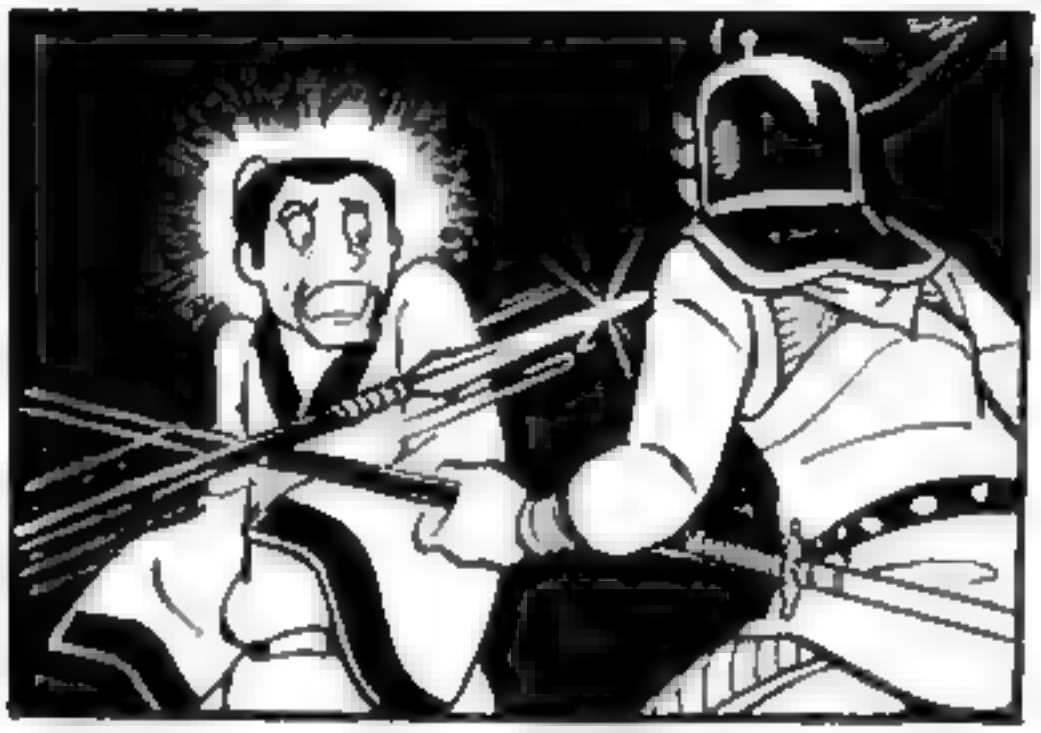
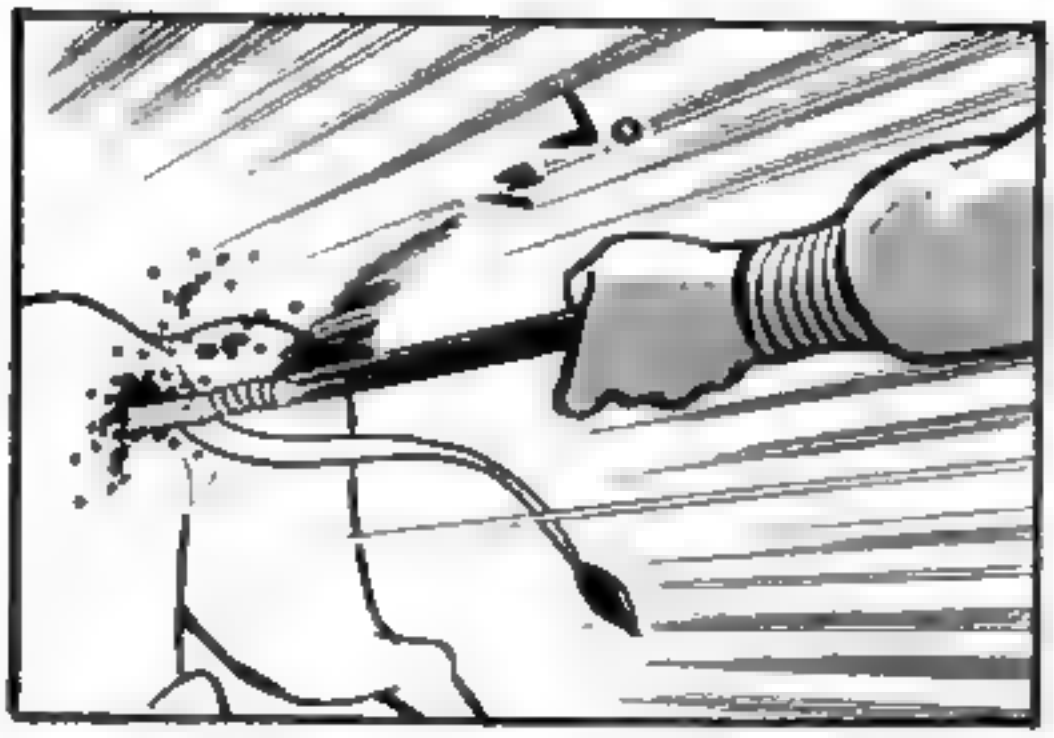
AHH!

PLEASE FORGIVE ME SIR! I BEG OF YOU, PLEASE!

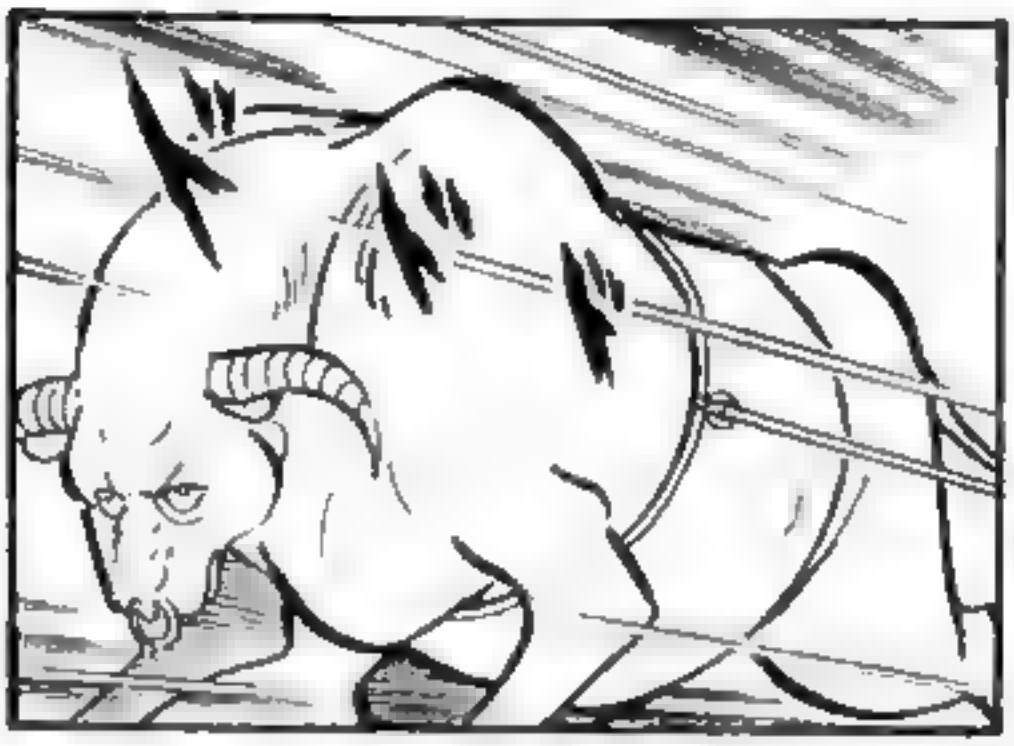
AHHHH! F-FATHER! FATHER, HELP!

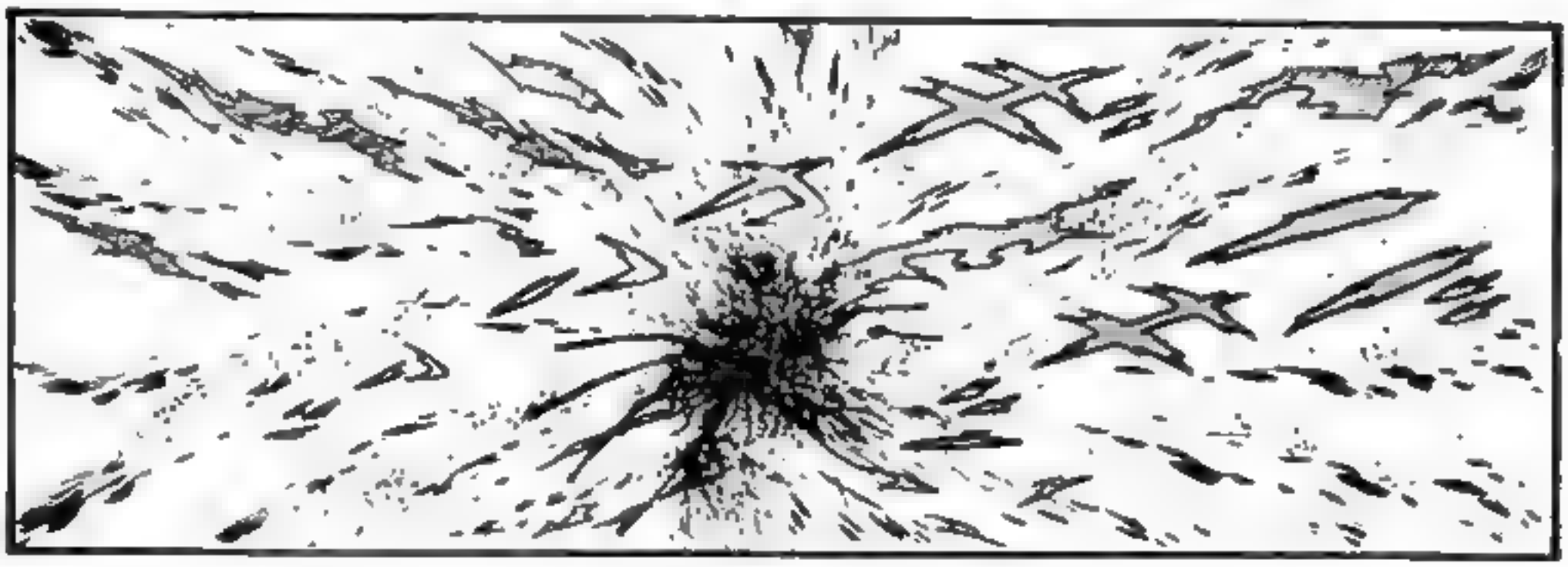


OHH, MY DAUGHTER!



NOW MAKE
THEM RUN!





SOB
SOB
SOB

AGHHH...

THIS IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THOSE WHO ARE LAZY. YOU MUST WAKE UP EARLY AND WORK UNTIL LATE AT NIGHT EVERY DAY FROM NOW ON.

YOU TRAITOR! I WON'T LET YOU HAVE YOUR TYRANNICAL WAYS WITH THIS COUNTRY!

AHH!

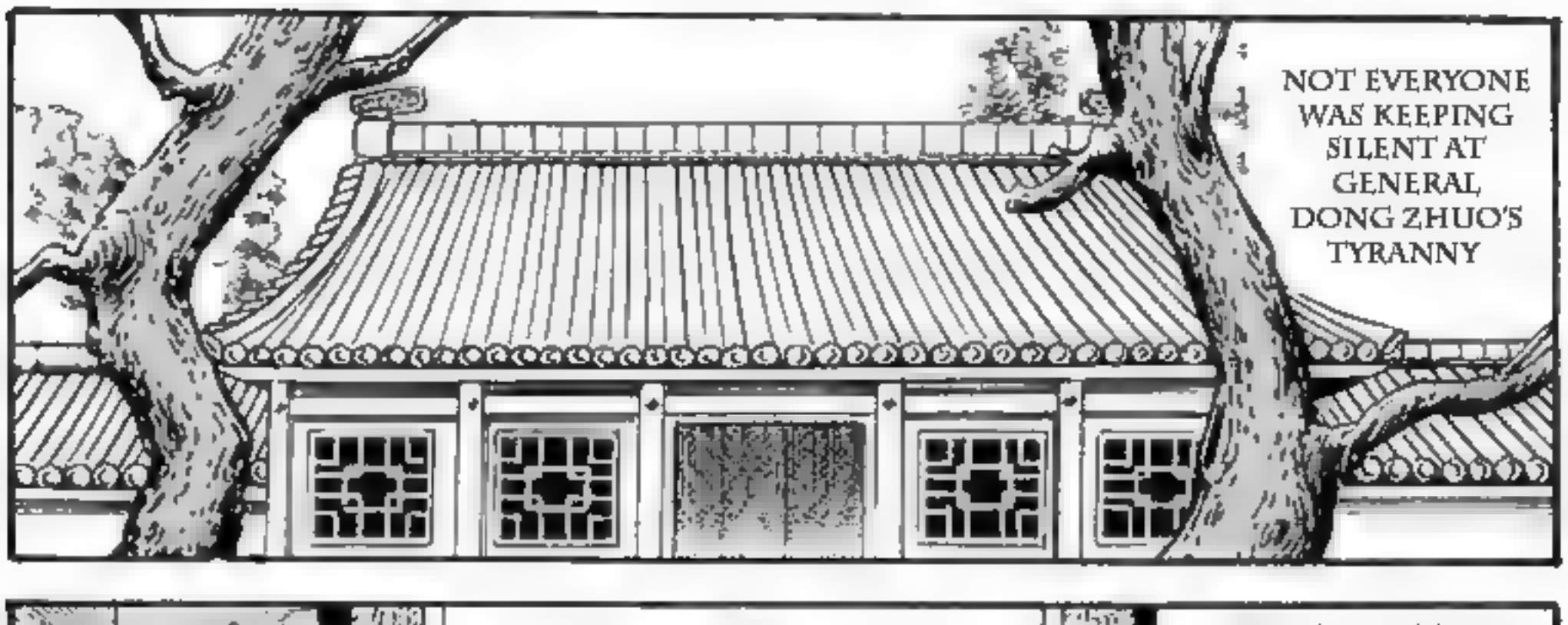
D-DAMN IT!!

ALRIGHT, LET US HEAD BACK TO THE PALACE.

HMPH, THERE ARE COUNTLESS OF IDIOTS LIKE HIM IN THIS WORLD.

AHAHAHAHA! THIS TURNED OUT TO BE MUCH MORE INTER-STING THAN SOME FLOWER VIEWING!

THE YOUTH, CAO CAO



WANG YUN, THE MINISTER OF MASSES*, HAD GATHERED FELLOW HIGH RANKING MINISTERS TO HIS HOUSE TO DISCUSS DONG ZHUO'S RECENT ACTS

*ONE OF THE THREE HIGHEST POSTS DURING THE HAN DYNASTY

WE WERE BORN IN THE WRONG TIMES...

IS 400 YEARS OF HAN DYNASTY COMING TO AN END AT LAST?

DISAGREE WITH HIM EVEN THE SLIGHTEST BIT AND HE'LL HAVE YOUR HEAD!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

HEH HEH HEH

HIGH RANKING MINISTERS CRYING AT NIGHT, AND GRUMBLING DURING THE DAY... DO YOU PLAN TO CRY DONG ZHUO TO DEATH?

HAHAHA, HOW COULD YOU NOT LAUGH AT THE PRESENT SITUATION!?

AND JUST WHAT IS SO HUMOROUS, CAO CAO!?

SILENCE! OR ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU DO NOT FIND THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THIS COUNTRY LAMENTABLE!?

JUST HOW IS GRUMBLING WHILE DRINKING FINE WINE GOING TO CHANGE A THING!?

THEN LET ME ASK YOU GENTLEMEN A QUESTION OF MY OWN.

I HAVE NOT BEEN FLATTERING DONG ZHUO TO STAY ON HIS GOOD SIDE BECAUSE I AM AFRAID OF HIM.

W-WHAT!?

ALL YOU PEOPLE CAN DO IS COMPLAIN. YOU HAVEN'T GOT THE BACKBONE NOR GUTS TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING.

WELL, AREN'T YOU AWFULLY HAUGHTY!! YOU THINK YOU ARE ANY BETTER!?

I AM WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO ASSASSINATE HIM.

HOW ABOUT IT THEN? WOULD YOU SIRS BE WILLING TO LEAVE THIS TASK TO ME?

WHA!?

SO YOU AGREE, THEN?

AS LONG AS IT MEANS THAT THIS COUNTRY WILL FIND PEACE ONCE MORE, VERY WELL THEN.

I HAD HEARD THAT YOU ARE IN POSSESSION OF A FAMOUS DAGGER CALLED THE SEVEN STAR BLADE.

WHAT IS IT?

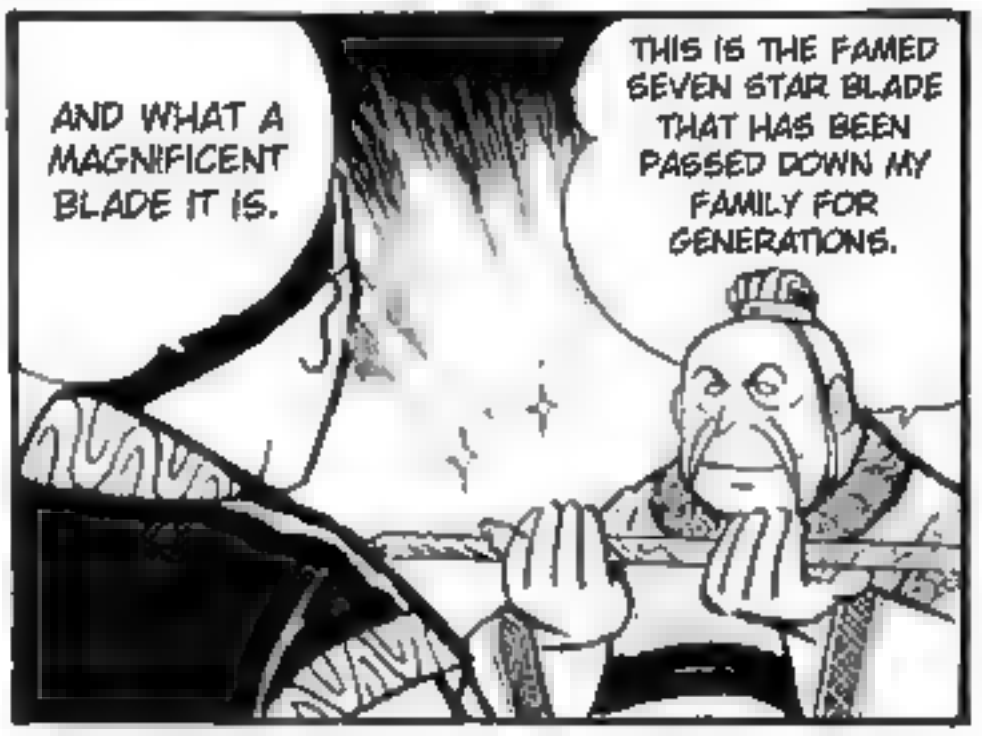
I JUST HAVE ONE REQUEST TO ASK OF YOU, SIR.

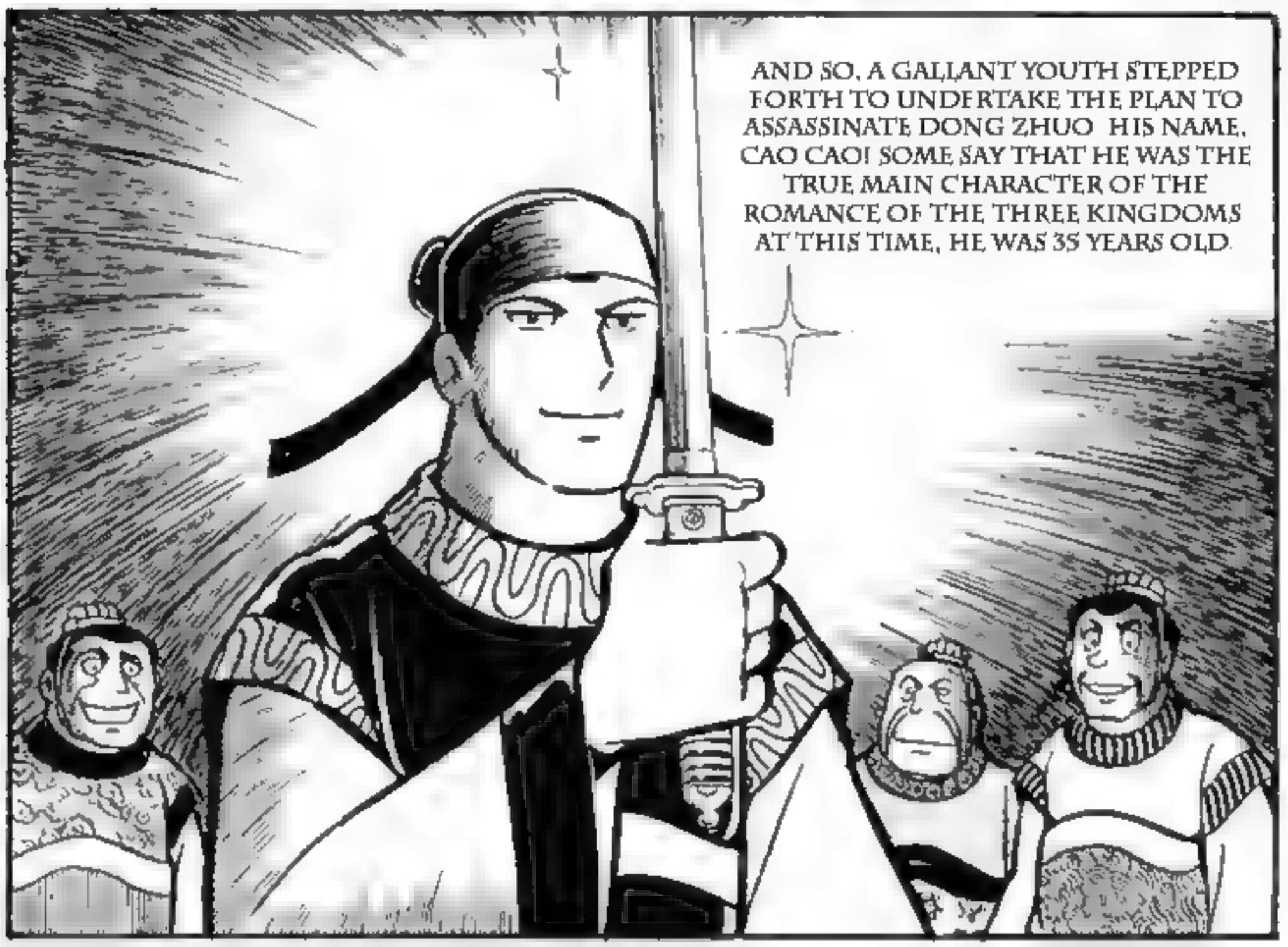
BRING THE SEVEN STAR BLADE.

FOR SLAYING DONG ZHUO, I WOULD NOT MIND LENDING YOU ANYTHING.

I WOULD LIKE TO BORROW THAT DAGGER TO SLAY DONG ZHUO.

AND HOW DANGEROUSLY SHARP IT LOOKS AS WELL.


AND WHAT A MAGNIFICENT BLADE IT IS.
THIS IS THE FAMED SEVEN STAR BLADE THAT HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN MY FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS.


AND SO, A GALLANT YOUTH STEPPED FORTH TO UNDERTAKE THE PLAN TO ASSASSINATE DONG ZHUO HIS NAME, CAO CAO! SOME SAY THAT HE WAS THE TRUE MAIN CHARACTER OF THE ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS AT THIS TIME, HE WAS 35 YEARS OLD.

BUT HE HAD LONG SINCE RETIRED AND WAS NOW LIVING IN CHENLIU OF HENAN PROVINCE

CAO CAO WAS THE SON OF CAO SONG, WHO WAS ONCE A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

THAT WAS BECAUSE CAO CAO'S EYE HAD A CERTAIN FIERY LIGHT THAT MADE HIM SHINE AMONG HIS BROTHERS

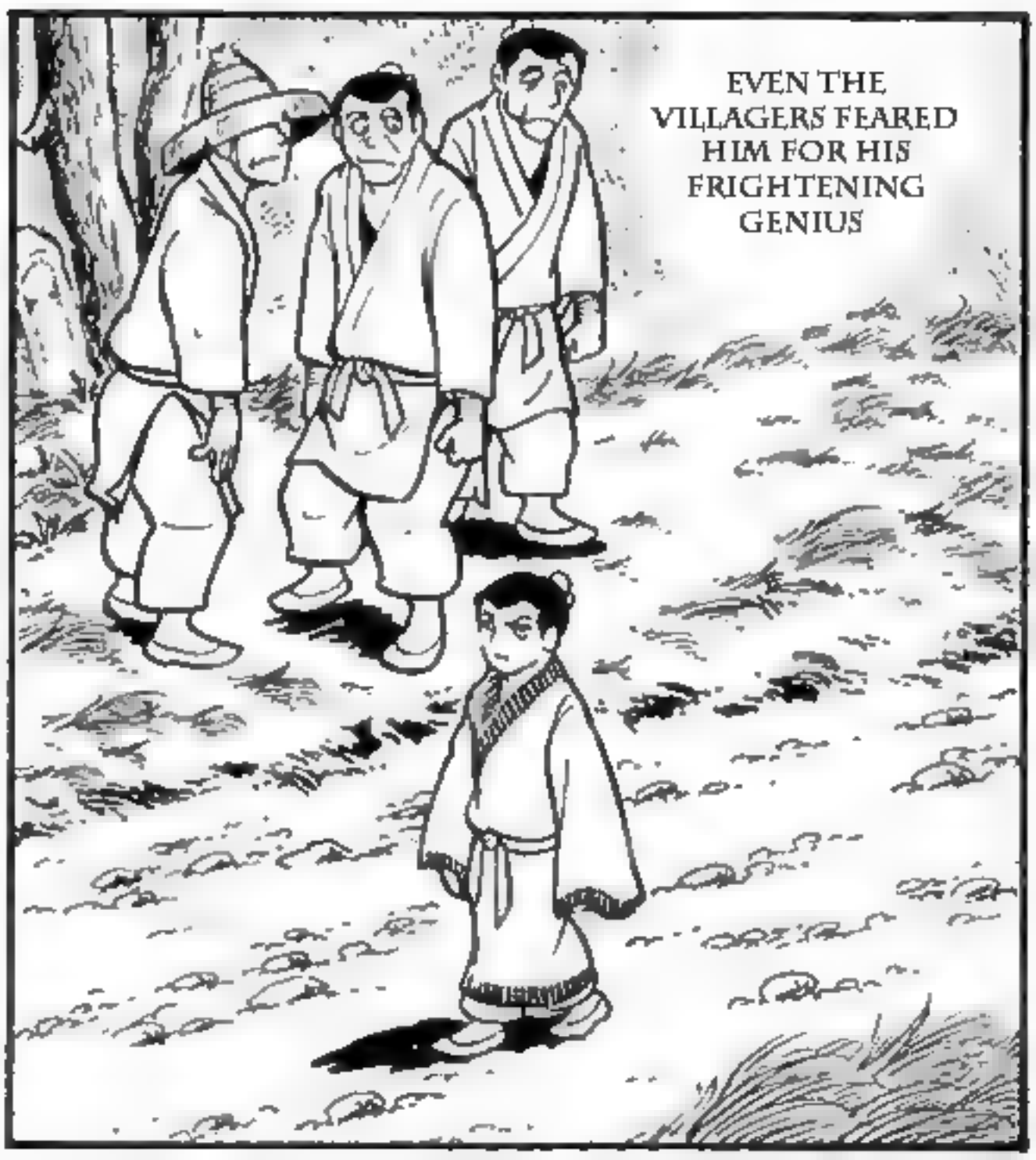
OUT OF ALL HIS SONS, CAO SONG ESPECIALLY ADORED CAO CAO

I CAN TELL FROM YOUR EYES ALONE. YOU ARE DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE REST.

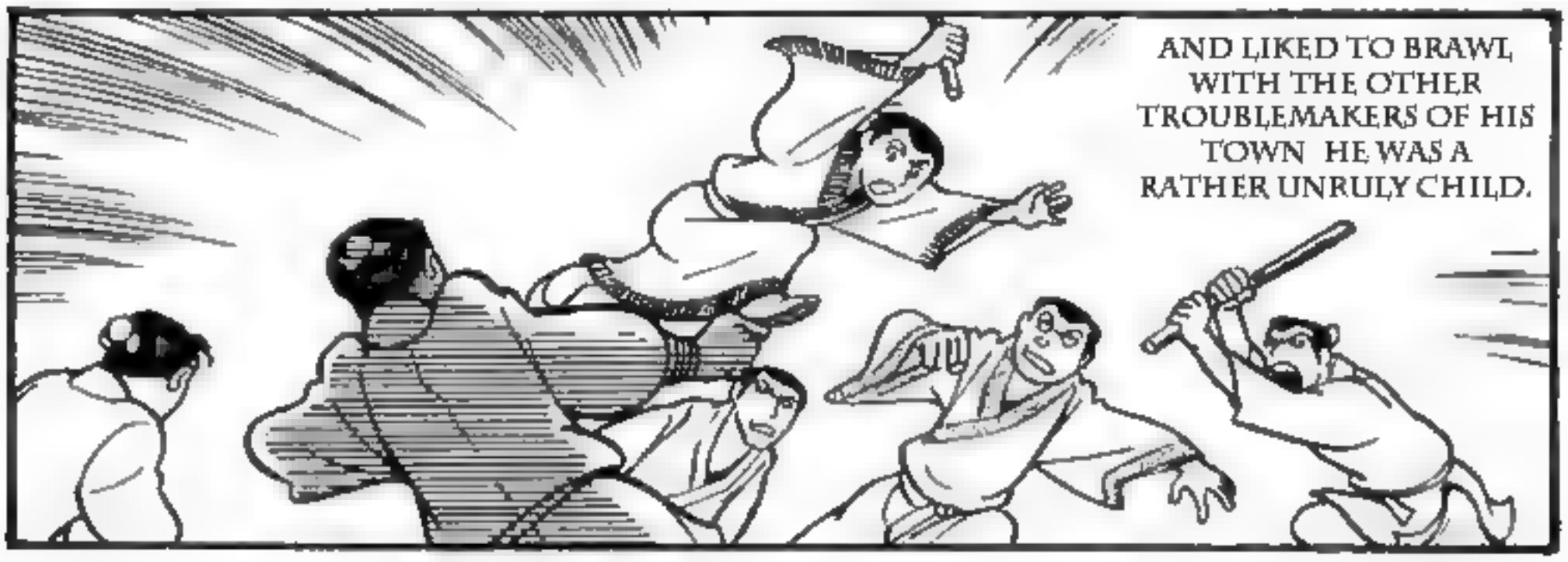
CAO CAO, YOU WILL GROW UP TO BE A FINE MAN ONE DAY.

HE WAS MOST CERTAINLY A VERY BRIGHT CHILD. THE IDIOM, "TEACH ONE, AND HE WILL KNOW TEN," PERFECTLY APPLIED TO CAO CAO

BUT CAO CAO WAS NOT A CHILD SOLELY DEVOTED TO HIS STUDIES


EVEN THE VILLAGERS FEARED HIM FOR HIS FRIGHTENING GENIUS

HE LOVED TO HUNT,


AND LIKED TO BRAWL WITH THE OTHER TROUBLEMAKERS OF HIS TOWN HE WAS A RATHER UNRULY CHILD.

I SEE. I SHALL SCOLD AND PUNISH HIM PROPERLY.

I BELIEVE YOU ARE BEING TOO SOFT WITH HIM. AFTER ALL, IT IS NATURAL OF PARENTS TO ONLY SEE THEIR CHILDREN'S ANGELIC SIDES.

HMM... SO CAO CAO HAS BEEN UP TO THOSE SORTS OF THINGS AGAIN?

WHAT IS IT, FATHER?

CAO CAO!

YOUR UNCLE JUST TOLD ME YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTING WITH THE VILLAGERS AND CRUELLY BULLYING A VILLAGER'S DAUGHTER!

I BELIEVED THAT YOU WOULD GROW UP TO BE A FINE ADULT BECAUSE YOU NOT ONLY HAVE BRAINS BUT THE COURAGE TO BACK IT UP! BUT WHAT IS THIS I HEAR OF YOU CAUSING NOTHING BUT TROUBLE FOR THE OTHER VILLAGERS!? I MUST HAVE BEEN TOO LENIENT IN YOUR UPBRINGING!

THE NEXT DAY WHEN HIS UNCLE CAME TO VISIT

AH, CAO CAO. IS YOUR FATHER HOME?

AGHHH!

HELP!!

WHAT IS THE MATTER!?

AGH

YES! WE MUST CALL A DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY!

WHAT! CAO CAO IS WRITHING IN PAIN AT THE FRONT GATES!?

WHAT!

ME...? WRITHING IN PAIN...?

W-WHAT... I THOUGHT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE WRITHING IN PAIN...

FATHER, YOU LOOK A LITTLE PALE. HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED?

AH, SO IT WAS UNCLE? WELL, HE DOES LOVE TO GIVE PEOPLE QUITE A FRIGHT AND PLAY SOME RATHER CRUEL TRICKS EVERY NOW AND THEN. OH WELL...

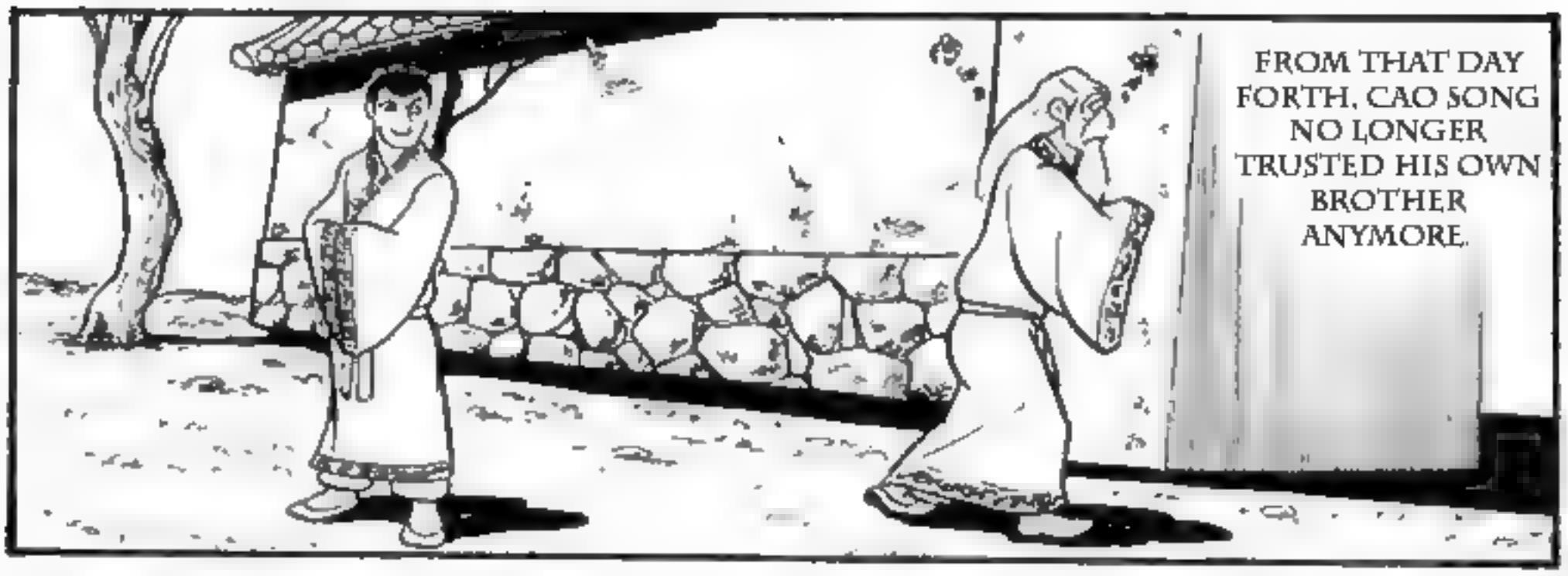
Y-YOUR UNCLE DID. HE JUST CAME RUNNING TO ME WHILE LOOKING VERY WORRIED.

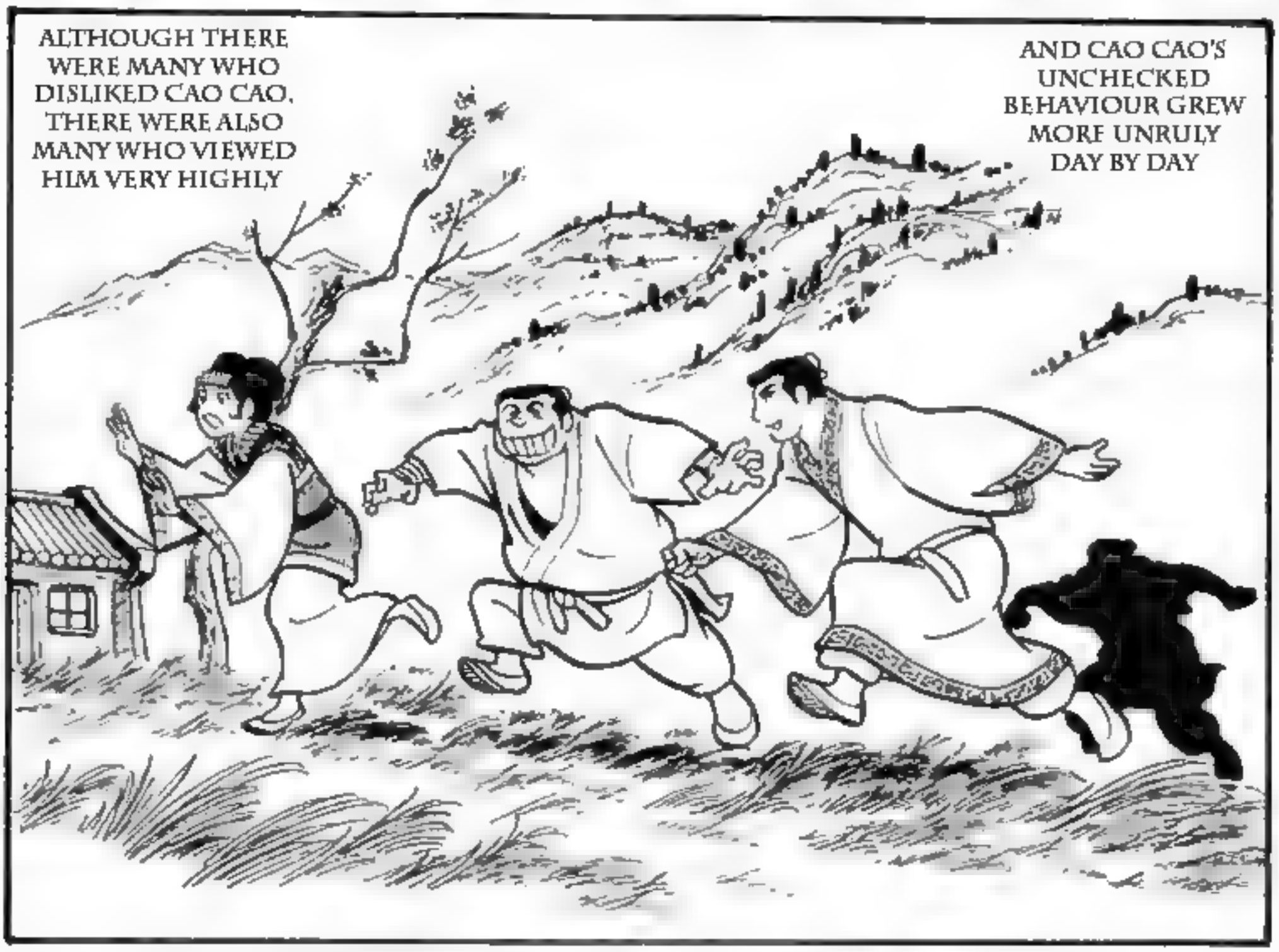
AHAHAHA! JUST WHO TOLD YOU SUCH A BAD JOKE AS THAT!?

S-SO THEN WHAT HE SAID THE DAY BEFORE WAS ALL A LIE?

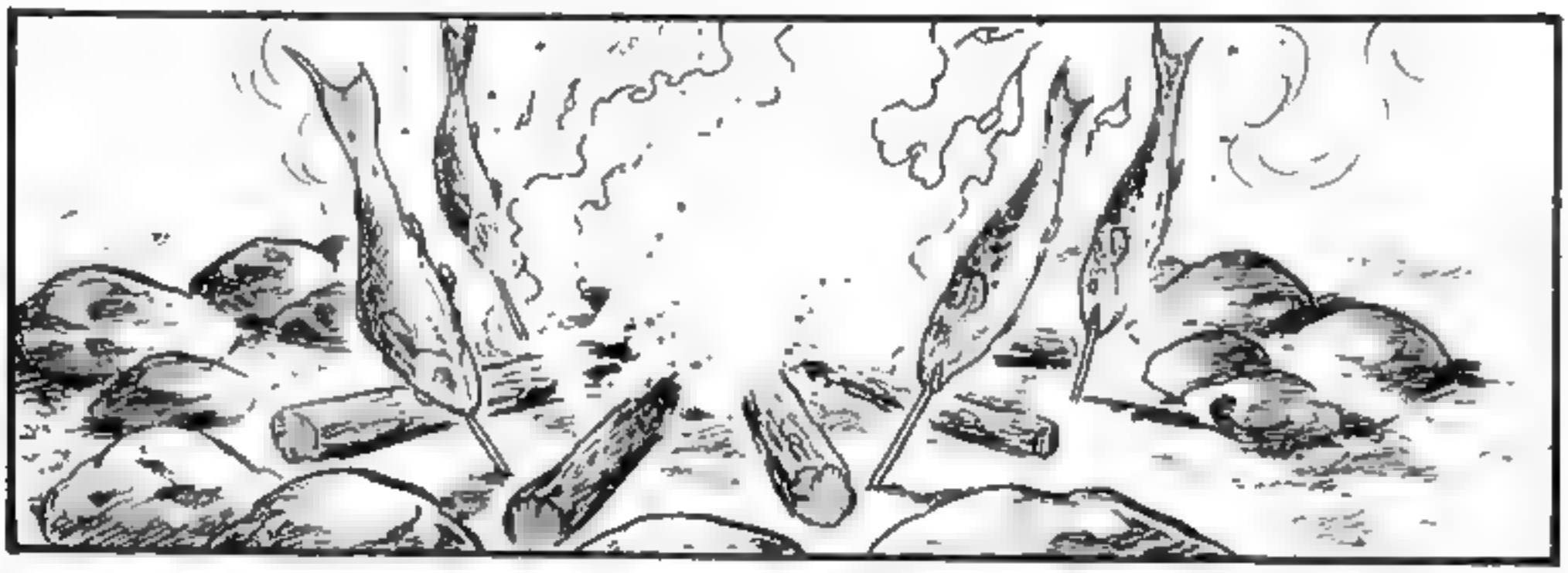
HE OFTEN SPREADS RUMORS OF HOW I'M BEING VIOLENT OR A NUISANCE TO OTHERS.

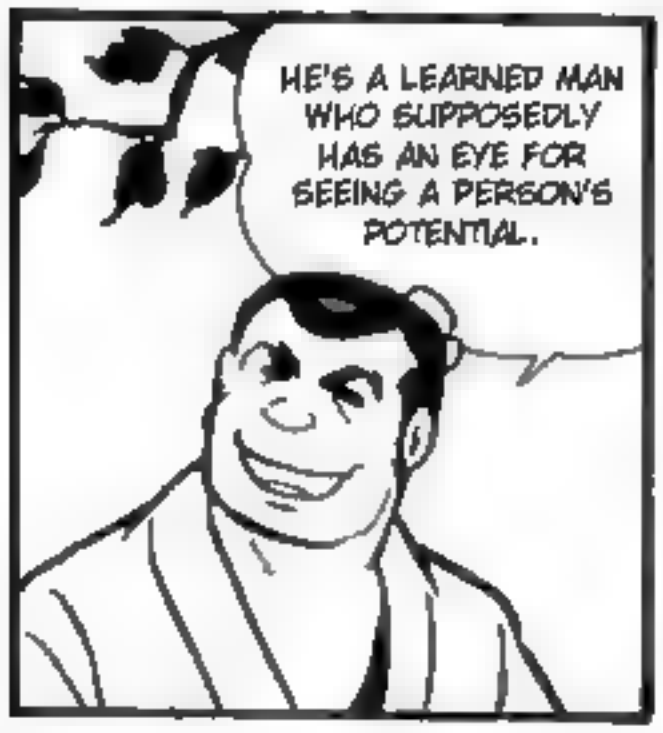
EVEN THE VILLAGERS OFTEN SAY SUCH THINGS, LIKE HOW HE DOESN'T SEEM TO LIKE HIS NEPHEW AT ALL.


FROM THAT DAY FORTH, CAO SONG NO LONGER TRUSTED HIS OWN BROTHER ANYMORE.


ALTHOUGH THERE WERE MANY WHO DISLIKED CAO CAO, THERE WERE ALSO MANY WHO VIEWED HIM VERY HIGHLY
AND CAO CAO'S UNCHECKED BEHAVIOUR GREW MORE UNRULY DAY BY DAY

IT'S PEOPLE LIKE HIM THAT END UP CHANGING THE COURSE OF HISTORY IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES.
HE'LL GROW UP TO BE SOMEONE IMPORTANT FOR SURE IN THE FUTURE.
HE'S DEFINITELY DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF US.

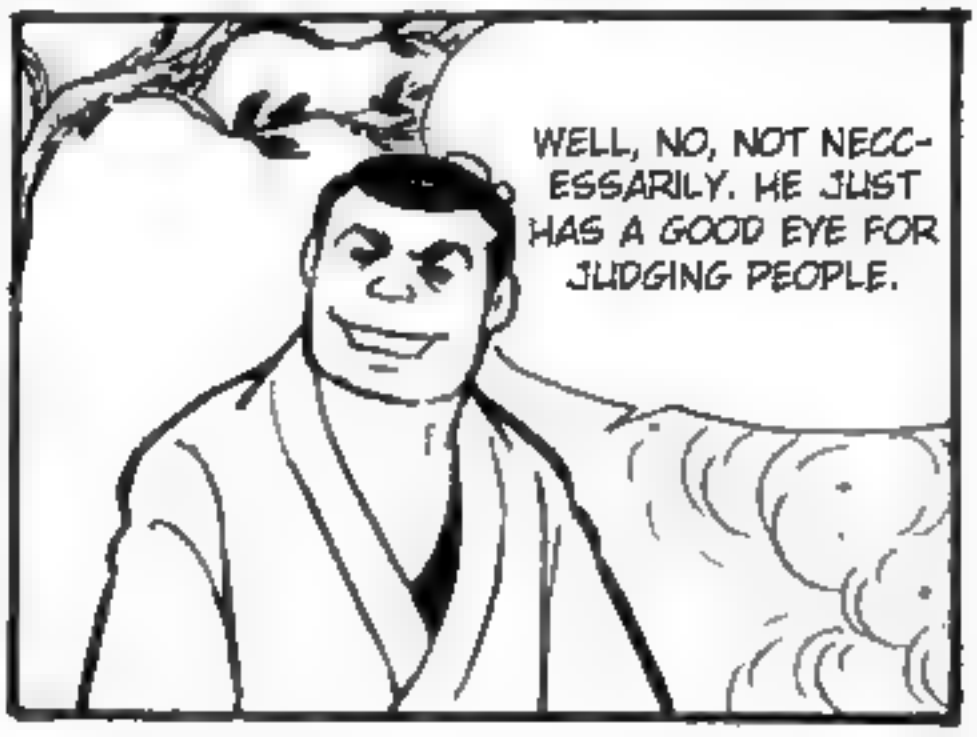



HE'S A LEARNED MAN WHO SUPPOSEDLY HAS AN EYE FOR SEEING A PERSON'S POTENTIAL.

A PHYSIOG-NOMIST, HUH?

XU SHAO? WHO'S THAT?
HEY CAO CAO. YOU SHOULD MEET A MAN NAMED XU SHAO AT LEAST ONCE.

I WOULDN'T MIND HIM PREDICTING HOW I'LL TURN OUT IN LIFE.
WELL, SOUNDS INTERESTING IN ANY CASE.


WELL, NO, NOT NECC-ESSARILY. HE JUST HAS A GOOD EYE FOR JUDGING PEOPLE.

HMM...

SO TELL ME, WHAT KIND OF A MAN WILL I BE?

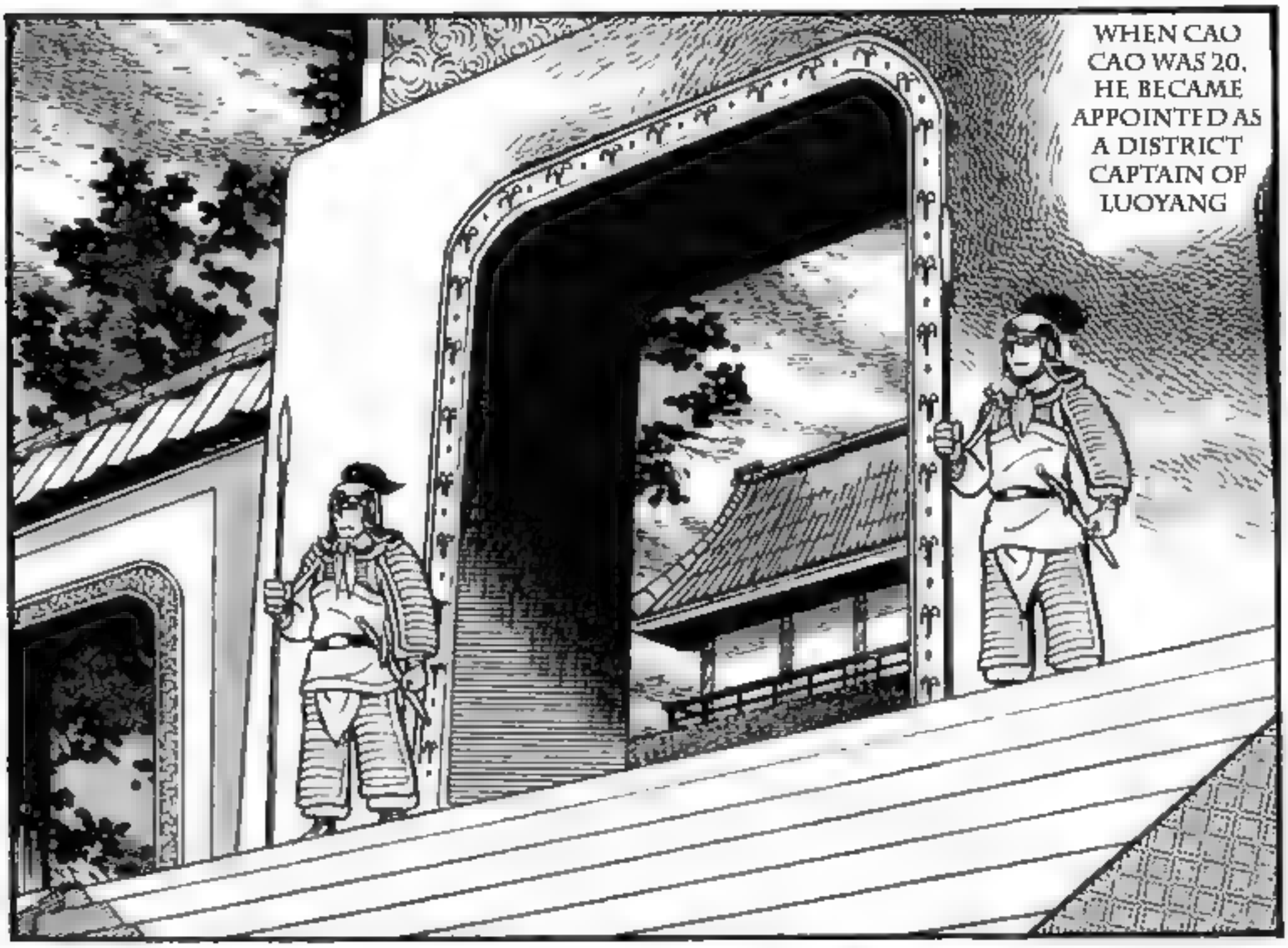
I HEARD YOU HAD A GOOD EYE FOR THESE THINGS.

HMM, YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU YOUR FORTUNE?

THAT MIGHT BE GOOD AS WELL.

A VILLAINOUS HERO IN CHAOTIC TIMES...

YOU SHALL BE A CAPABLE MINISTER IN PEACEFUL TIMES, BUT A VILLAINOUS HERO IN CHAOTIC TIMES.


WHEN CAO CAO WAS 20, HE BECAME APPOINTED AS A DISTRICT CAPTAIN OF LUOYANG

IN HIS NEW POSITION, HE PUNISHED ANY WHO BROKE THE LAW REGARDLESS OF THEIR STATUS

ONE TIME, HE EVEN FLOGGED A RELATIVE OF A CABINET MINISTER

AND ONCE HIS INTELLECT WAS ACKNOWL EDGED HE BEGAN TO RISE UP IN RANK.

FROM THIS INCIDENT HIS NAME BECAME KNOWN

DURING THE YELLOW SCARF REBELLION, HE WAS PROMOTED TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE CAVALRY

DONNING A RED ARMOR, A RED SADDLE, AND RED FLAGS, HE ROAMED ACROSS THE LAND ACHIEVING NUMEROUS VICTORIES, THUS FURTHER SPREADING HIS NAME THROUGHOUT THE LAND

IS THE GENERAL HERE?

THE GERNERAL IS RESTING IN HIS STUDY ROOM RIGHT NOW, SIR.

GENERAL, IT IS I, CAO CAO. I HAVE TO COME TO GREET YOU.

THE STUDY ROOM? IT SEEMS THAT FATE IS ON MY SIDE.

OHH, CAO CAO. BUT YOU SEEM A LITTLE LATE, IT IS ALREADY THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY.

MY APOLOGIES BUT MY HORSE IS RATHER OLD AND SLOW...

DAMN, LU BU IS BY HIS SIDE...

NO I DO NOT, SIR. I AM AFRAID THAT I DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH WEALTH TO BUY A NEW HORSE.

DO YOU NOT HAVE A BETTER HORSE?

YES, SIR.

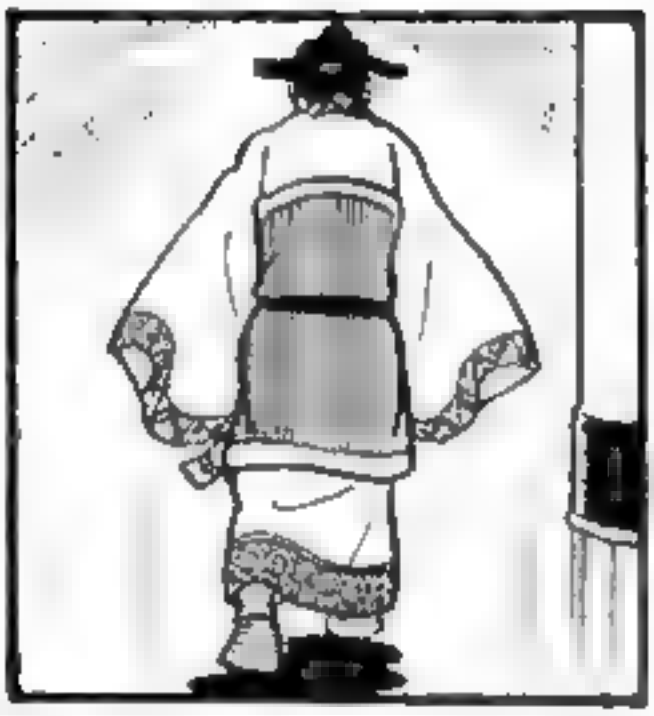
LU BU.

BUT I CANNOT JUST HAVE YOU BE LATE ALL THE TIME...

HMM, I SEE...

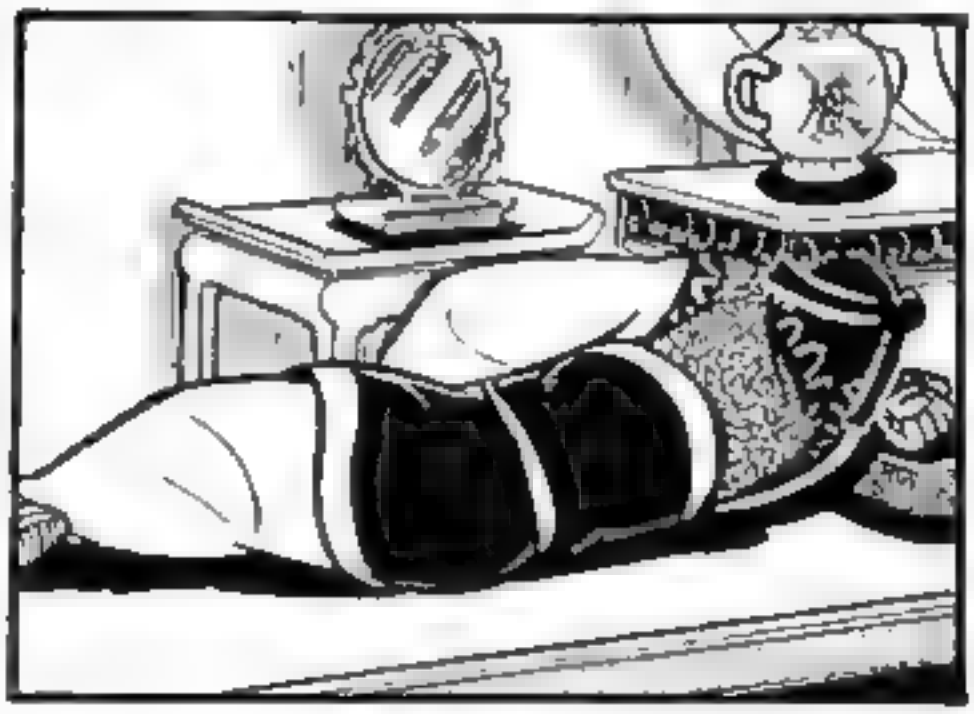
YES, SIR.

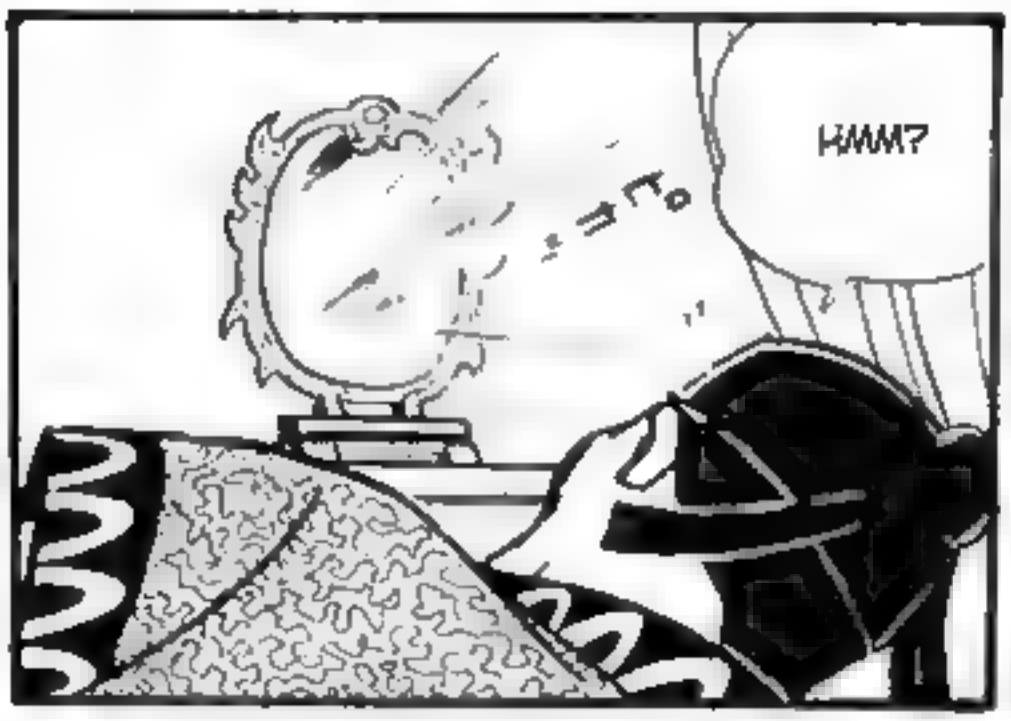
LET CAO CAO USE ONE OF MY HORSES FROM NOW ON.

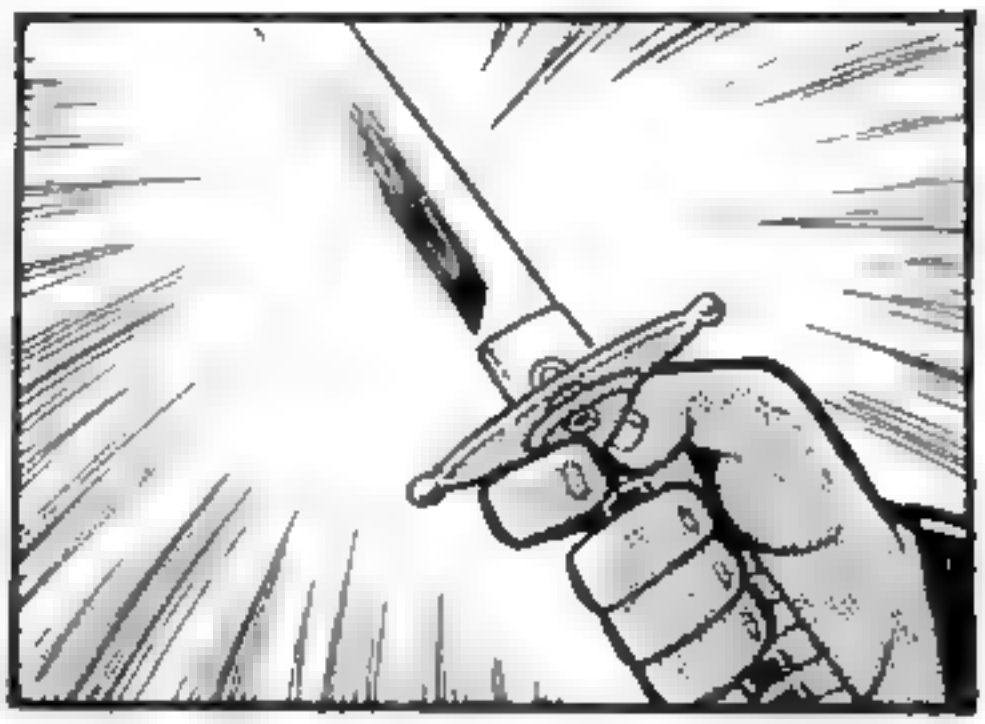


GOOD.

YES.
PLEASE WAIT HERE FOR JUST A MOMENT, CAO CAO.




HMM?



I HAVE RECENTLY ACQUIRED A MOST RARE AND TREASURED BLADE AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD MAKE AN EXCELLENT PRESENT TO YOU, SIR.

WHAT WAS THAT SHINING LIGHT JUST NOW!?

YES, SIR.

SO THAT IS THE BLADE?

OF COURSE, SIR.

WELL, LET ME TAKE A LOOK.

OHH, IT TRULY IS A GORGEOUS BLADE!!

LU BU, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS BLADE?

AH, THANK YOU.

I HAVE BROUGHT THE HORSE.

HERE IS THE SCABBARD, SIR. THERE ARE 7 JEWLS EMBEDDED ON IT.

AH, OF COURSE.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE HORSE?

GENERAL, MAY I TRY RIDING IT RIGHT HERE AND NOW?

DO AS YOU PLEASE.

OHH, WHAT AN OUTSTANDING HORSE!

THANK YOU, SIR.

GENERAL, I DO NOT THINK CAO CAO WILL BE RETURNING.

WHAT?

DID HE NOT SAY HE WOULD BE TESTING OUT THE HORSE ONLY BRIEFLY?

HMM, I WONDER WHEN CAO CAO WILL BE BACK?

EVER SINCE HE GAVE YOU THAT SWORD, HE HAS BEEN ACTING VERY STRANGE.

I BELIEVE THAT HE HAS ALREADY RUN OFF WITH THE NEW HORSE.

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, HE WAS ACTING QUITE NERVOUSLY AND SUSPICIOUSLY.

LI RU!

YOU CALLED ME, SIR?

NNGHHH, THAT CAO CAO! I TREAT HIM NICELY AND THIS IS HOW HE TREATS ME IN RETURN!?

WHAT!?

CAO CAO WAS JUST HERE AND AFTER THIS AND THAT... SO IN SHORT, HE HAS NOT YET COME BACK.

SO YOU THINK THAT AS WELL, TOO!?

I AM CERTAIN THAT HE WAS AIMING TO TAKE SIR'S LIFE THEN AND THERE WITH THAT BLADE!

YES, I SHALL SEND OUT THE TROOPS RIGHT AWAY SIR!

ARREST THAT DAMNED CAO CAO IMMEDIATELY!!

THAT CRAFTY LITTLE...!

SPREAD WANTED POSTERS OF HIM THROUGH-OUT THE LAND!

THE GUARDS AT THE EAST GATE LET HIM OUT AFTER HEARING THAT HE WAS TASKED WITH AN URGENT MISSION BY YOU, SIR!

GENERAL, CAO CAO IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND AT HIS RESIDENCES!

YES, SIR.

I SHALL GRANT THE POSITION OF A MARQUIS TO WHOMEVER BRINGS HIM TO ME ALIVE. AND IF YOU BRING JUST HIS HEAD, I SHALL STILL HANDSOMELY REWARD A 1000 GOLD PIECES!

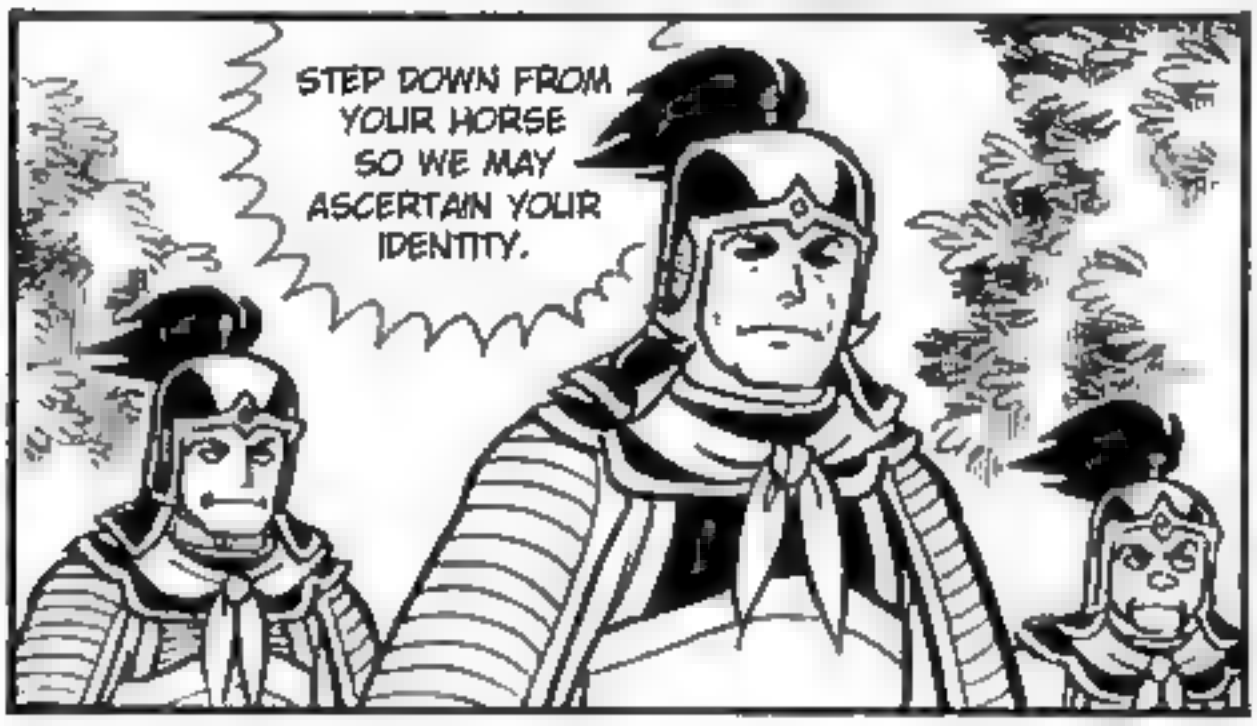
YES SIR, I SHALL NOT LET A SINGLE GUILTY PERSON ESCAPE.

AND I'M CERTAIN THAT CAO CAO DID NOT PLAN THIS ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ALONE. THERE MUST BE OTHER SUPPORTERS. I WANT YOU TO FIND OUT WHO AND ARREST THEM ALL AS WELL.

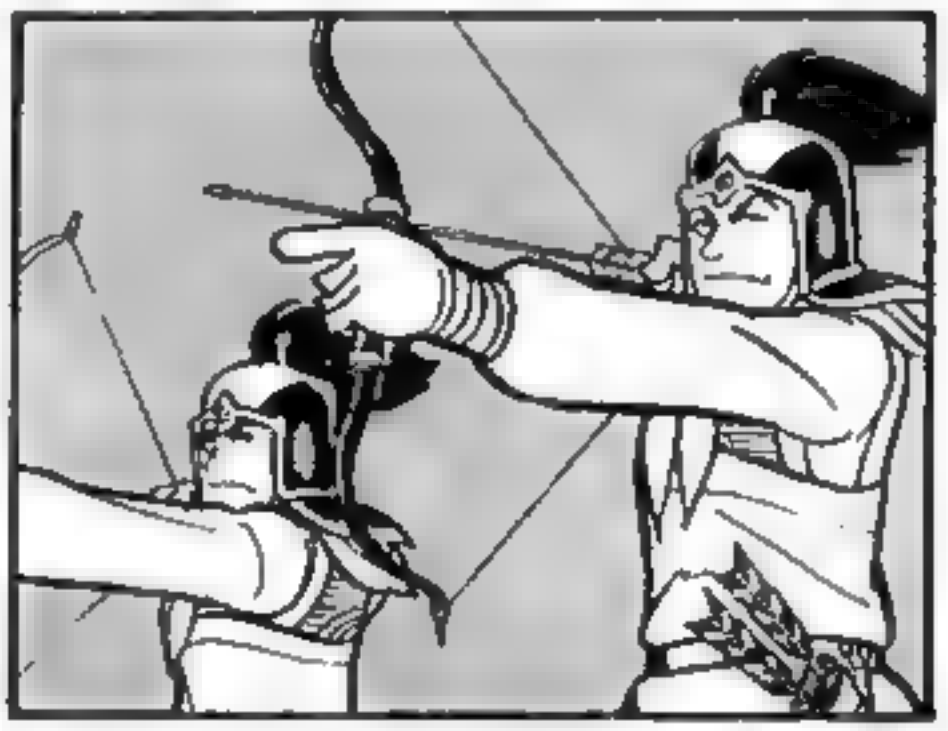
AND SO THE ORDER FOR CAO CAO'S ARREST WAS SENT ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

HALT!

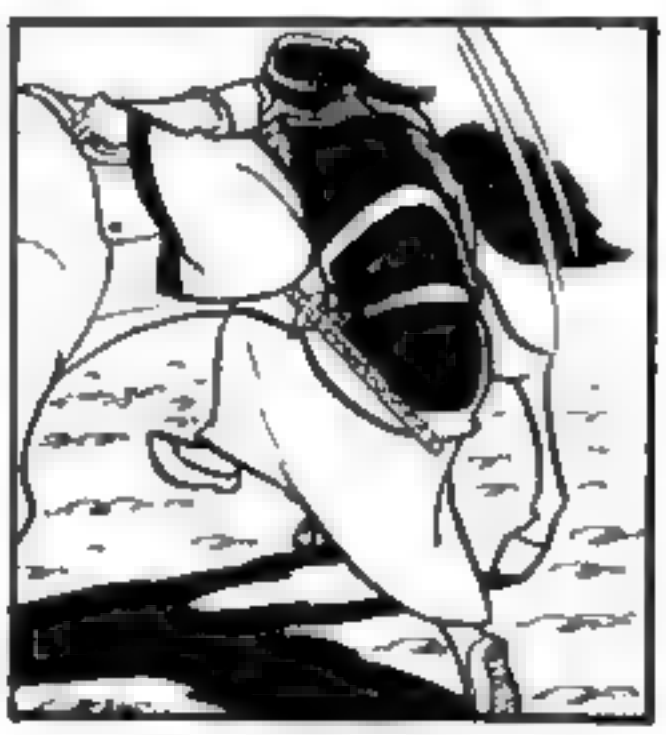
THERE'S BEEN AN ORDER TO ARREST A MAN NAMED CAO CAO.


STEP DOWN FROM YOUR HORSE SO WE MAY ASCERTAIN YOUR IDENTITY.

IS THIS THE END...?



AHH! THIS MAN IS CAO CAO FOR SURE! I'VE SEEN HIM ONCE BEFORE IN THE CAPITAL!



ARREST HIM!!

LET US HAVE A FEAST TONIGHT!

NOW WALK!

EVEN IF WE BRING HIM DEAD, IT'S STILL A 1000 GOLD PIECES!
HAHAHA, WHAT A FIND! WITH HIM, WE'LL ALL BE RICH!

AHAHA, DRINK! DRINK! DRINK! LET'S ALL DRINK TO OUR SUCCESS!!

HMM?

CAO CAO, YOU COULD HAVE LIVED A CARE-FREE LIFE, SERVING UNDER GENERAL DONG ZHUO. JUST WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED?

WHICH IS WHY I WANT TO KNOW WHY YOU BETRAYED DONG ZHUO.

I AM CONCERNED FOR THIS COUNTRY'S FUTURE.

HAHAHA, AND JUST WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO KNOW SUCH A THING, ESPECIALLY AFTER YOU'VE ALREADY ARRESTED ME?

ALRIGHT, I SHALL YOU TELL OF MY REASONS THEN. FOR GENERATIONS, MY ANCESTORS HAVE BEEN LOYAL SERVANTS OF HAN. OUR LORDS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE EMPERORS OF HAN, SO WHY MUST I GROVEL BEFORE DONG ZHUO AND HIS TYRANNY!?

THOUGH THE WILL OF HEAVEN WAS NOT ON MY SIDE AND I NOW LIE IMPRISONED HERE...

I WISHED TO KILL DONG ZHUO FOR THIS COUNTRY THAT HAS PROTECTED AND TAKEN CARE OF MY ANCESTORS.

BUT I HAVE ALREADY PREPARED TO GIVE UP MY LIFE FOR THIS COUNTRY, I SHALL NOT SHAMELESSLY BEG FOR MY LIFE NOW.

I WAS PLANNING TO RETURN TO MY HOMETOWN AND CALL ALL THE NOBLE HEROES OF THIS LAND TO RAISE AN ARMY AND DEFEAT DONG ZHUO.

WHAT!?

I UNDERSTAND. PLEASE MAKE YOUR ESCAPE, SIR.

NOT A PERSONAL ONE, BUT THINKING OF THE PEOPLE'S CURRENT ANGUISH, I CANNOT SUPPORT DONG ZHUO.

DO YOU HAVE SOME SORT OF A GRUDGE AGAINST DONG ZHUO AS WELL?

QUICKLY, WHILE THE OTHERS ARE DEEP ASLEEP FROM ALL THE LIQUOR!

LET US WORK TOGETHER TO GATHER THE JUST PEOPLE STILL REMAINING IN THIS LAND.

I SHALL RISK MY LIFE ALONG WITH YOU, SIR.

BUT DOING THIS WILL BRING YOU INTO TROUBLE AS WELL!

CHENG GONG. COURTESY NAME, GONGTAI.

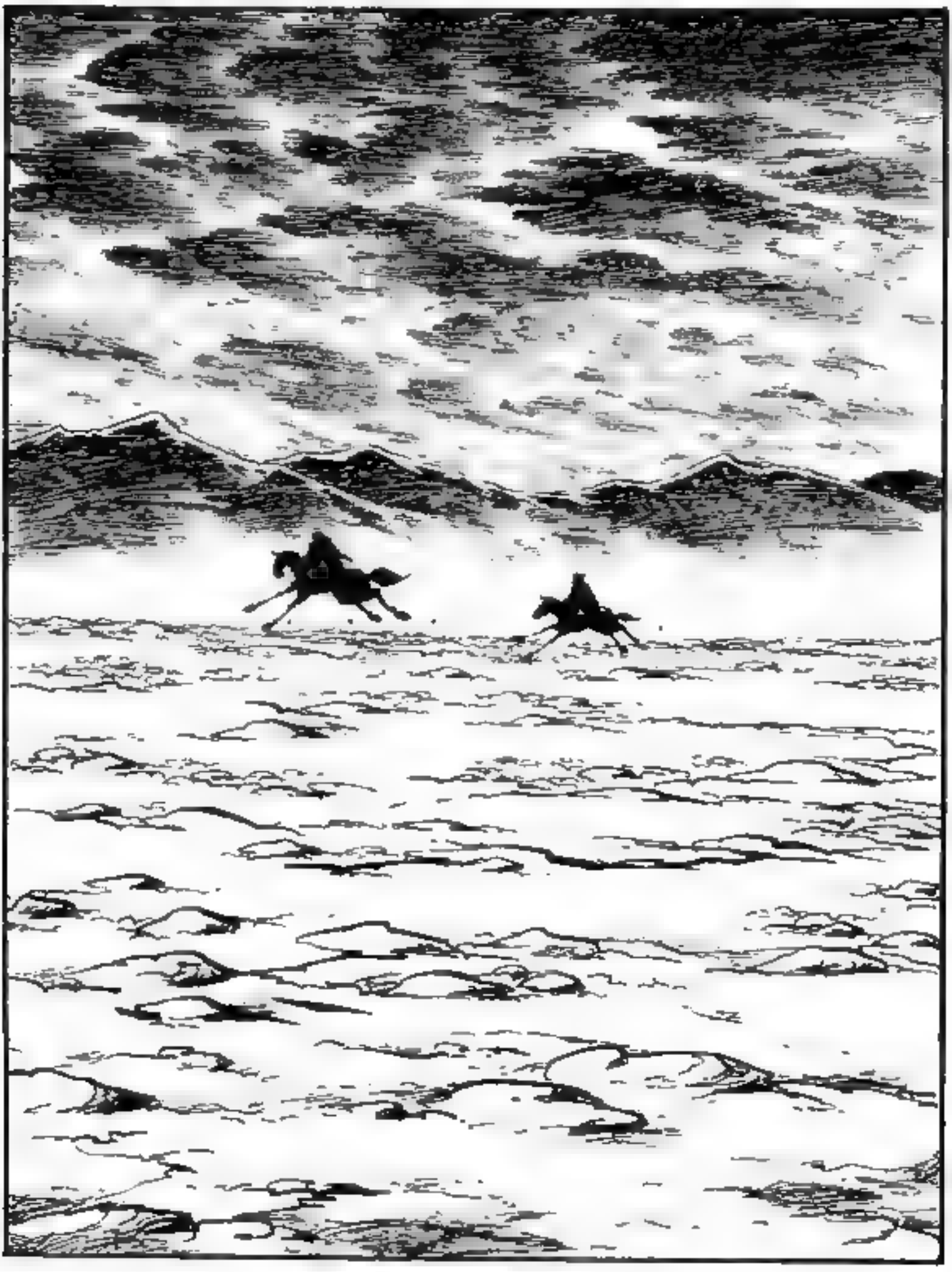
WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

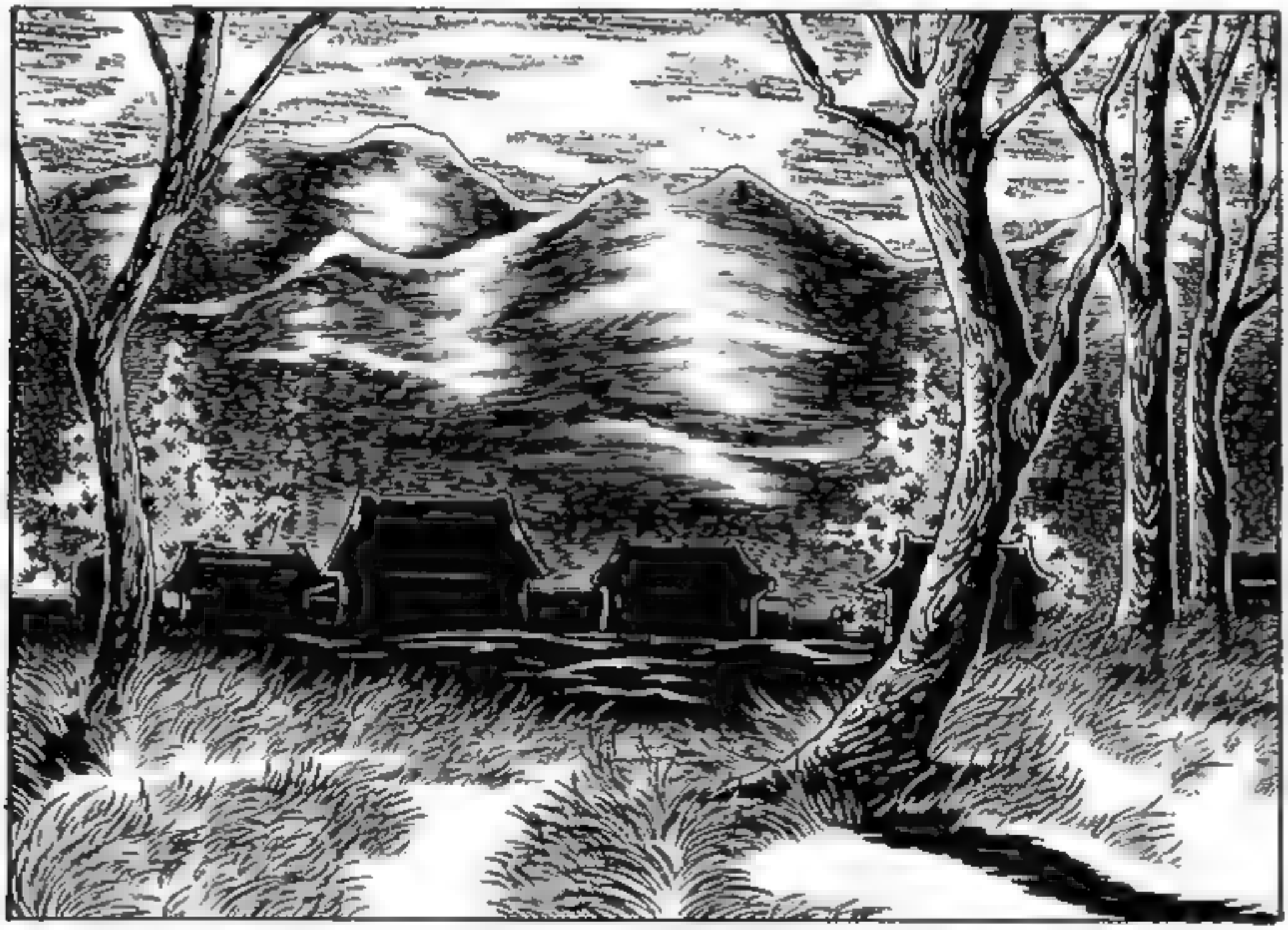
TO THINK THAT I WOULD MEET A COMRADE LIKE YOU HERE...!

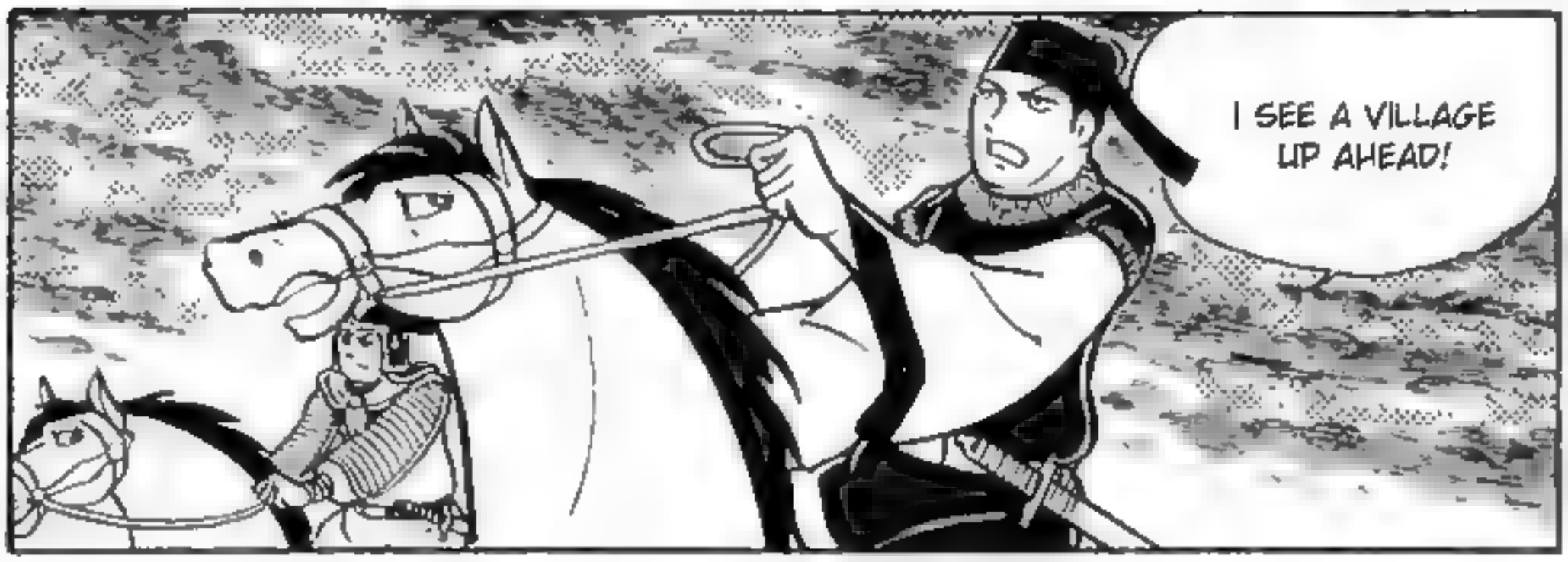
YES.

QUICKLY, WE MUST RUN OFF WITH THE HORSES!

THE VILLAINOUS HERO ARISES






I SEE A VILLAGE UP AHEAD!

CHENGGAO ...?

AH, THAT'S RIGHT. THERE SHOULD BE A MAN HERE NAMED LU BOSHE.

I SAW A SIGNPOST EARLIER THAT READ CHENGGAO.

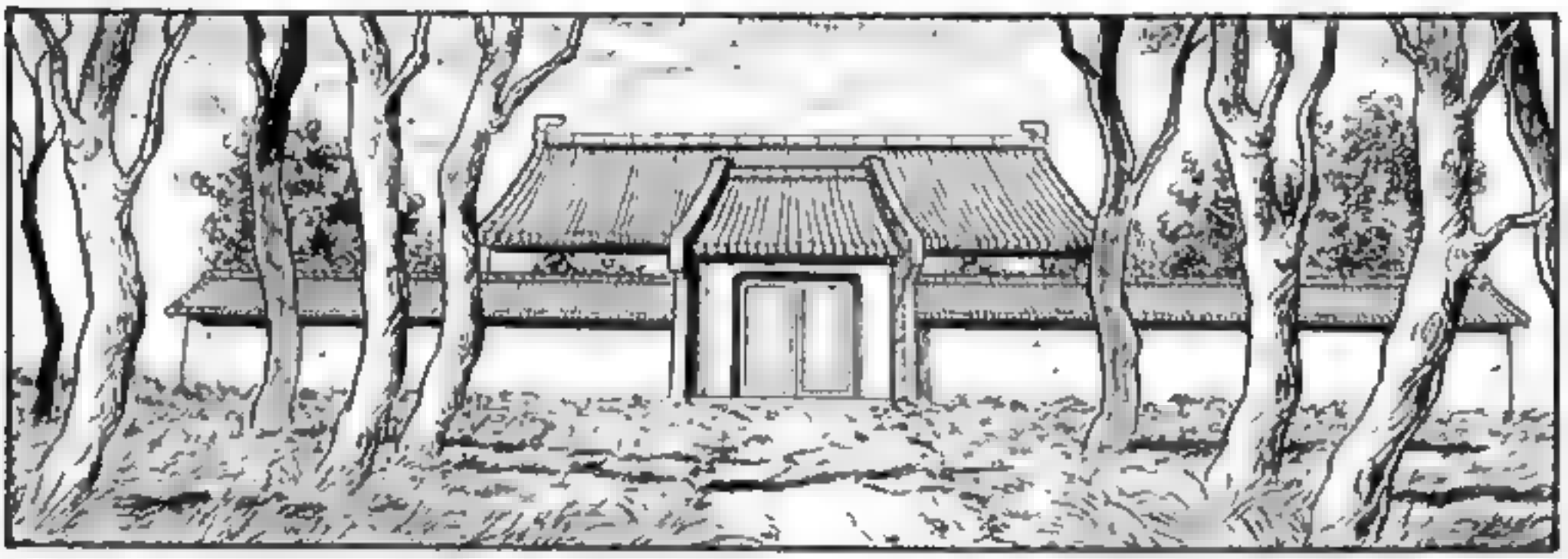
JUST WHERE IS THIS PLACE?

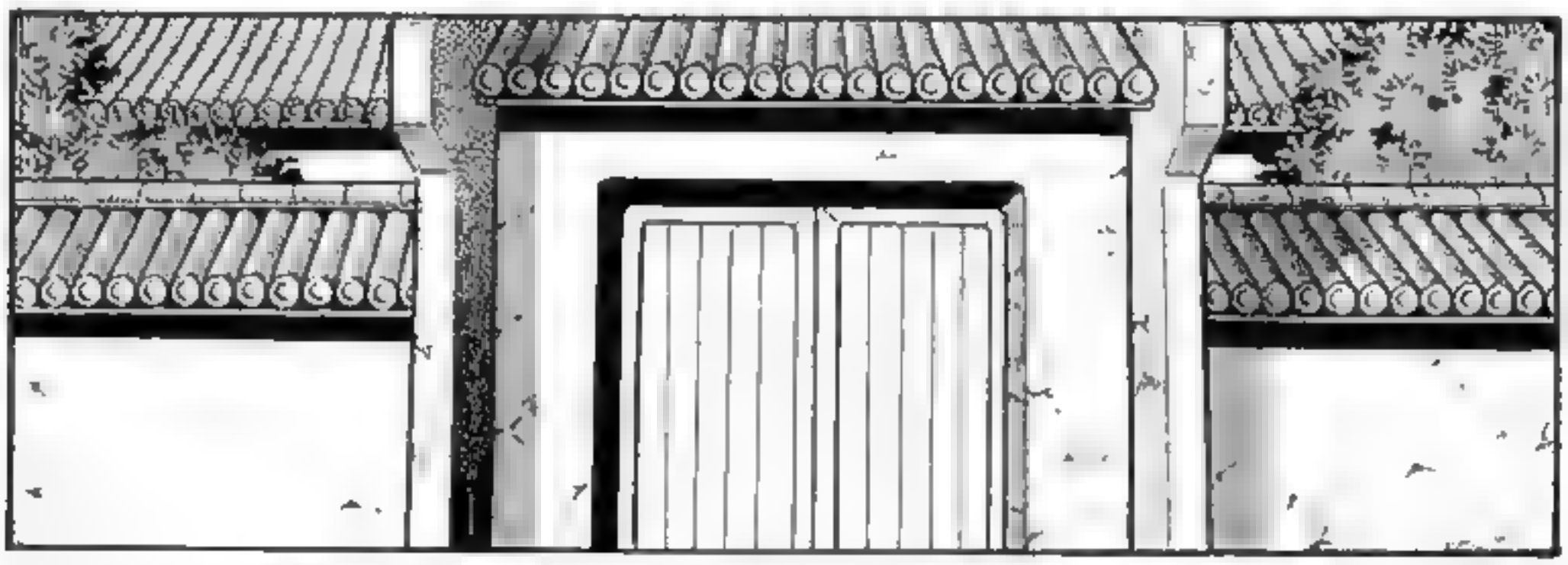
YOU HAVE ACQUAINTANCES EVEN IN THESE SMALL VILLAGES?

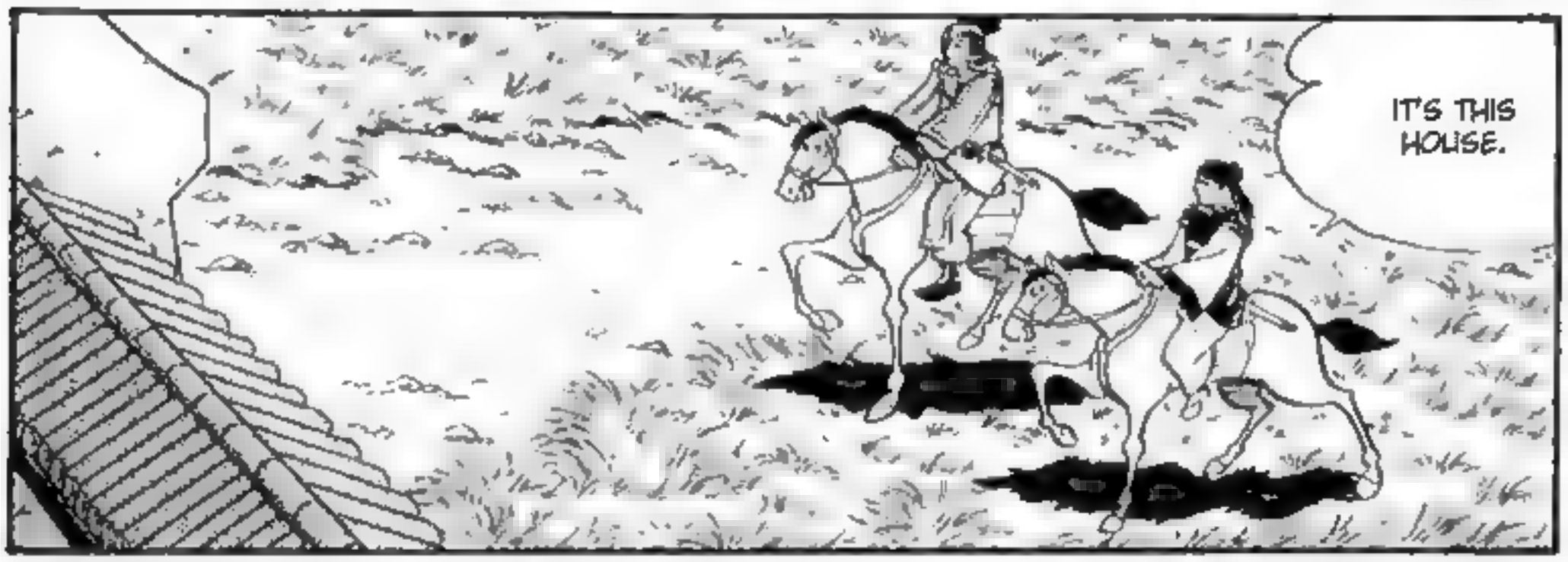
LET US GO SEE IF WE CAN LODGE AT HIS ESTATE.

THAT IS VERY GOOD NEWS TO HEAR.

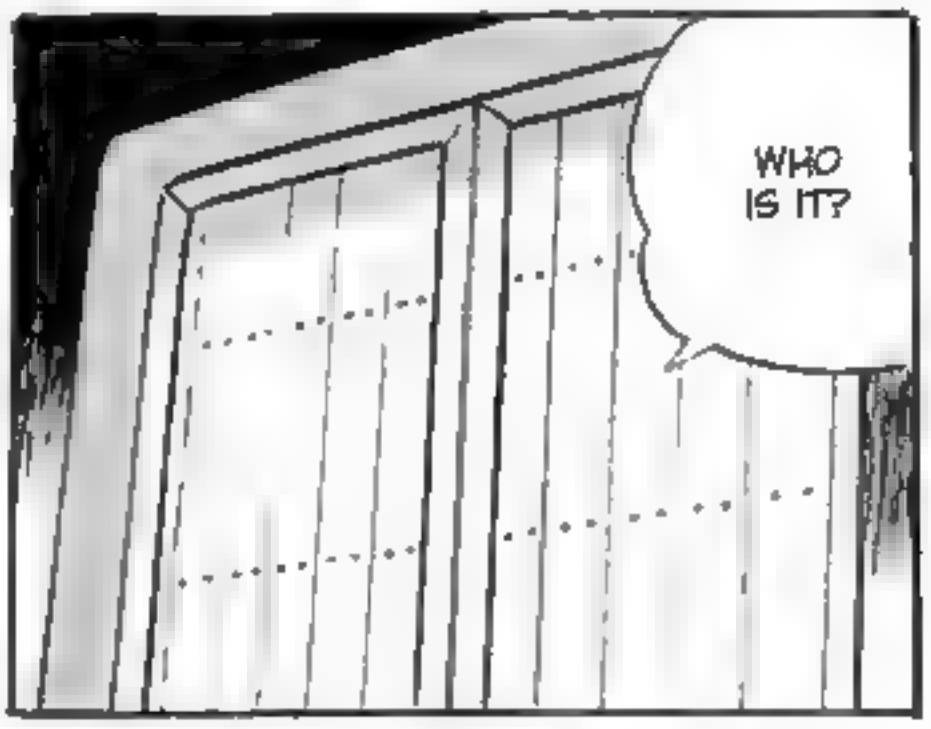
YES, HE IS A SWORN BROTHER OF MY FATHER AND I JUST RECALLED THAT HE LIVES AROUND HERE.






IT'S THIS HOUSE.

IT IS CAO CAO OF THE CAO FAMILY.


WHO IS IT?

CAO CAO!?

PLEASE, COME INSIDE.

WELL, YOU CAN TELL ME THE DETAILS INSIDE.

JUST WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU? THERE HAVE BEEN WANTED POSTERS OF YOU FLYING AROUND.

HERE. THIS IS THE WANTED POSTER OF YOU.

THE TRUTH IS, I ATTEMPTED TO ASSASSINATE DONG ZHUO BUT I FAILED.

1000 GOLD PIECES FOR JUST MY HEAD AND THE PROMOTION TO A MARQUIS IF I'M BROUGHT TO THE AUTHORITIES ALIVE.

HMPH, THE REAL TRAITOR TO HAN IS HIM, NOT I.

WHAT!!

OH, IS THAT HOW IT WAS?

I WAS ARRESTED BY THIS MAN, BUT ONCE LEARNING OF MY REASONS FOR WANTING TO ASSASSINATE DONG ZHUO, IT TURNED OUT THAT HE FELT THE SAME WAY. AND SO HE FREED ME AND WE ESCAPED TOGETHER.

AH, I MUST INTRODUCE YOU TO THIS MAN. HE IS CHENG GONG, THE FORMER CAPTAIN OF A GARRISON IN ZHONGMU COUNTY.

I THANK YOU GREATLY FOR HELPING OUT CAO CAO. IF NOT FOR YOUR KINDNESS, THE CAO FAMILY MIGHT HAVE MET A DREADFUL END.

THANK YOU, WE COULD REALLY USE A DRINK ABOUT NOW.

WELL, I SHALL GO BUY SOME WINE FOR US THEN.

HMM?

HE DOES SEEM TO BE RUNNING A LITTLE LATE...

I WONDER WHAT IS TAKING LU BOSHE SO LONG...?

?

WHAT IS IT?

SSSHH!

...MUST KILL...

HURRY UP AND TIE...

THIS IS THE SOUND OF SOMEONE SHARPENING A BLADE.

LU BOSHE PRETENDED TO GO BUY SOME WINE BUT SECRETLY ALERTED THE AUTHORITIES THAT WE WERE HERE SO HE COULD RECEIVE THE REWARD.

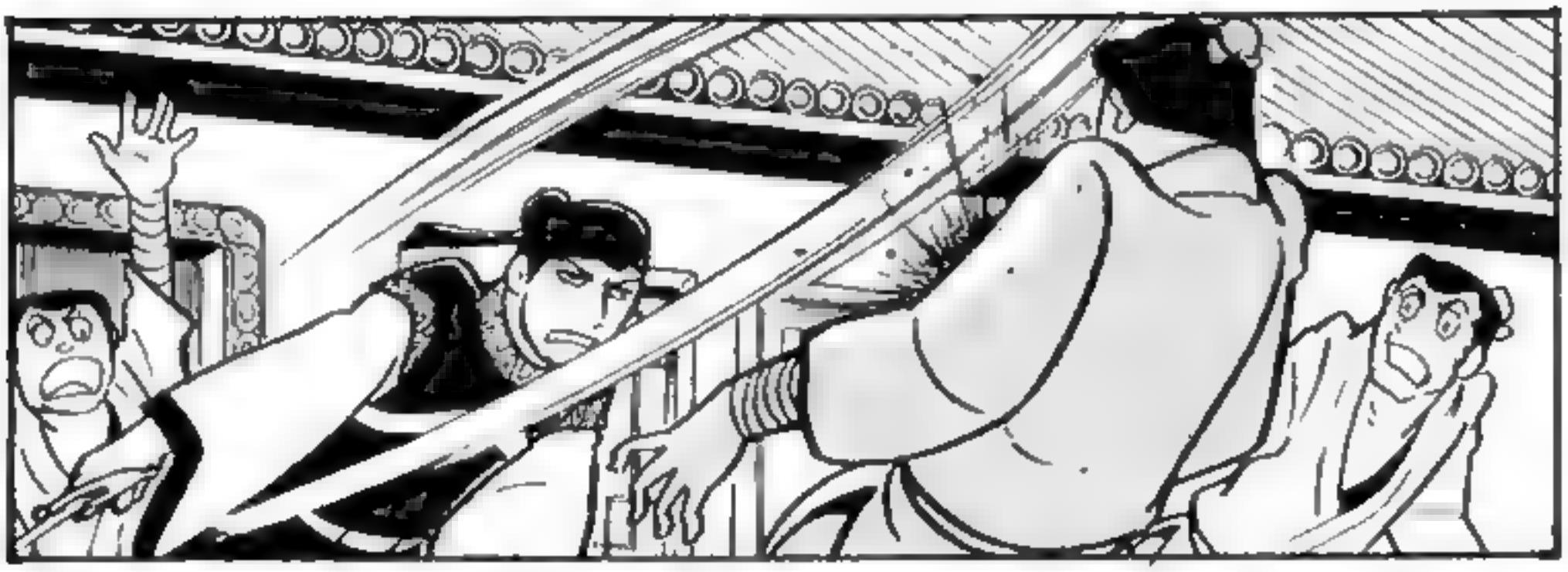
I THINK I KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON.

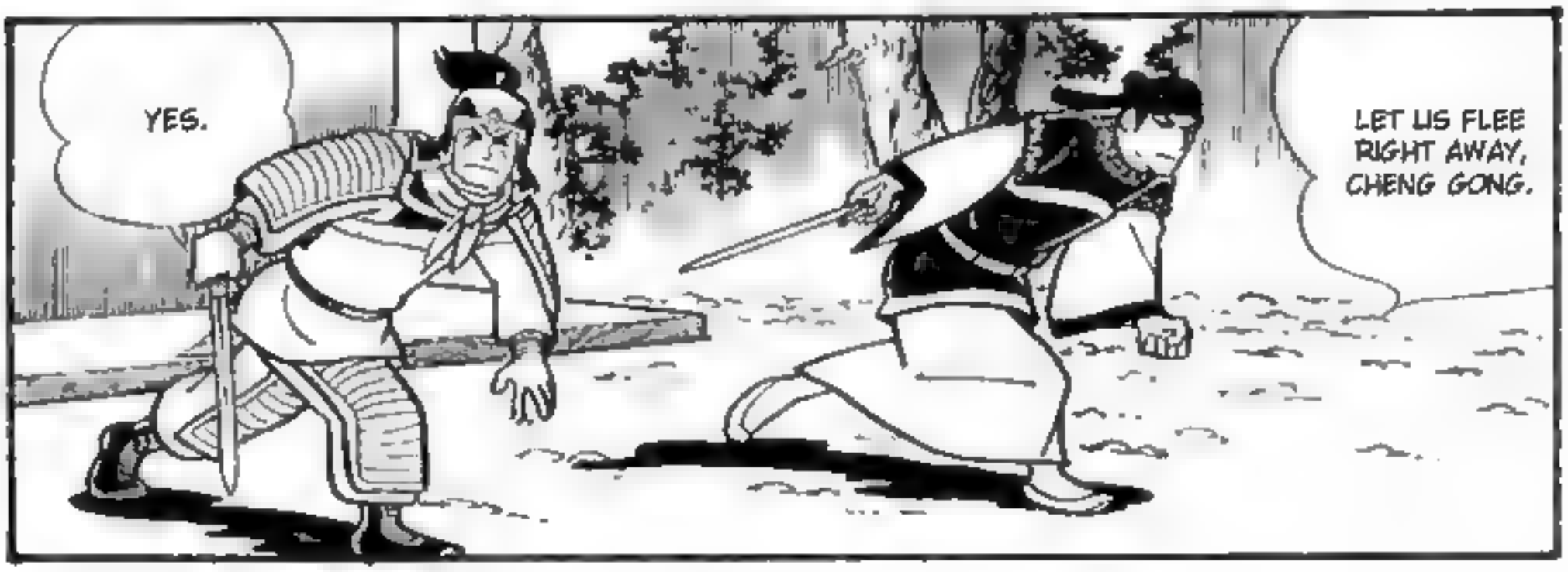
YES.

IF THIS IS HOW THINGS ARE, THEN WE CANNOT JUST QUIETLY WAIT TO BE AMBUSHED, CHENG GONG!

?

?




YES.
LET US FLEE RIGHT AWAY, CHENG GONG.

AHH!

AHH!

PERHAPS SO.

I THINK THE TYING-UP AND KILLING WAS REFERRING TO THIS BOAR INSTEAD.

CAO CAO, I THINK WE MAY HAVE MADE A VERY BAD CALL.

YES.

BUT SINCE THINGS HAVE TURNED OUT LIKE THIS, WE CAN STAY HERE NO LONGER.

CHENG GONG! WE HAVE NO TIME, WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?

I MUST AT LEAST PRAY FOR THEIR SAFE PASSAGE TO THE AFTERLIFE TO SHOW MY REPENTANCE.

IT TROUBLES MY MIND VERY MUCH.

THAT IS NOT FITTING OF A WARRIOR. ON THE BATTLEFIELD, THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF INNOCENT SOLDIERS DYING EACH DAY AND THEY WILL CONTINUE TO DIE, NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU PRAY OR REPENT.

LET US MAKE HASTE!

AHH!

...!

HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED, CAO CAO?

OH, I CAN ALWAYS SEND MY SERVANT TO TAKE CARE THAT KIND OF THING.

AH, NO... WE JUST REALIZED THAT WE HAD FORGOTTEN SOMETHING AT THE TEA SHOP WE STOPPED BY BRIEFLY BEFORE.

WELL THEN, PLEASE COME BACK QUICKLY. I HAVE TOLD THE SERVANTS TO COOK A BOAR IN YOUR HONOUR.

AH, NO NEED FOR THAT. IT'LL ONLY BE SOME MINUTES IF I GO BY HORSE.

?

WAIT HERE FOR A MINUTE, CHENG GONG.

?

STOP, STOP!

I HAVE SOMETHING TO TAKE CARE OF FIRST.

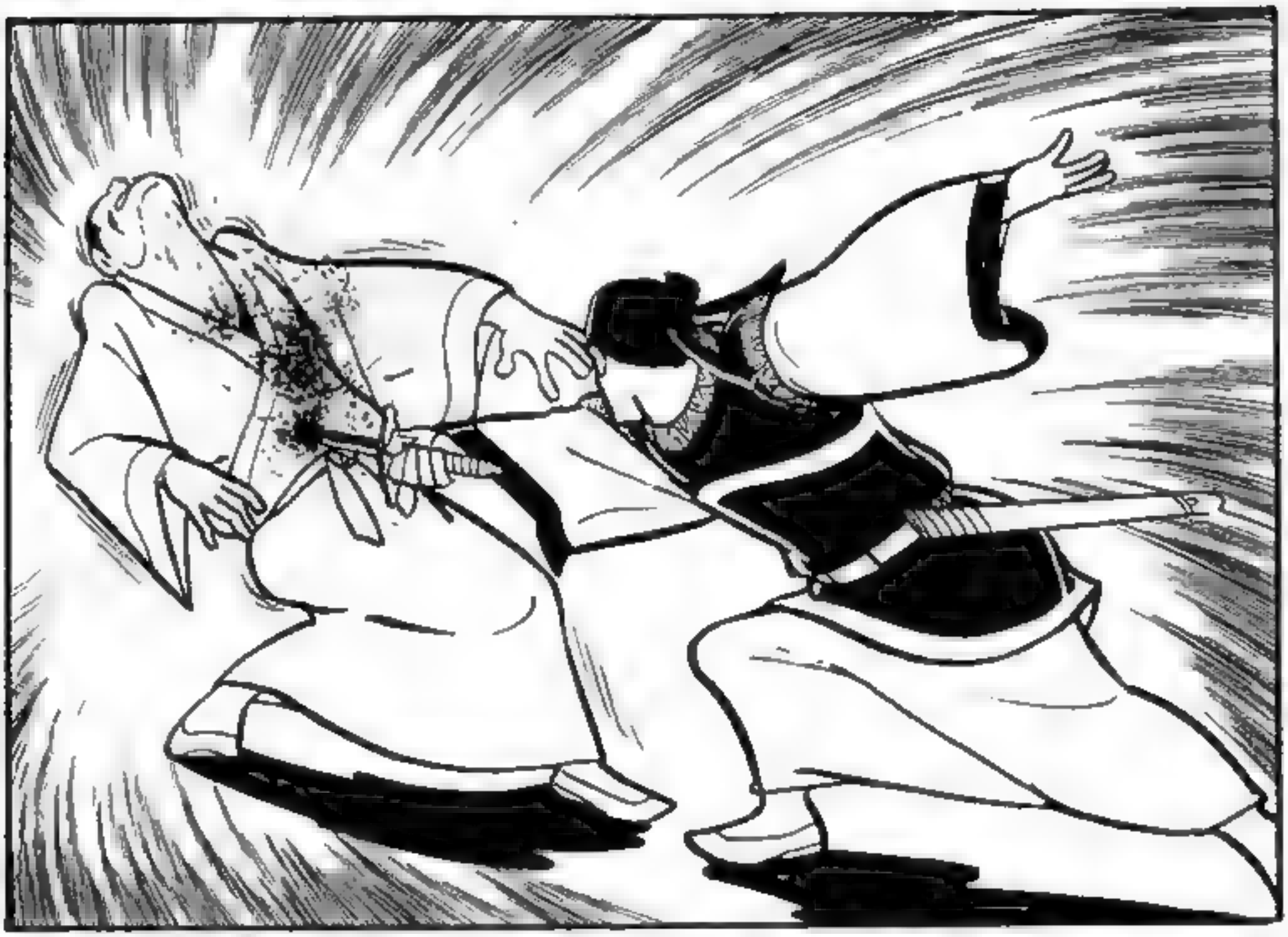
LU BOSHE!

AH, HAVE YOU ALREADY RETRIEVED THE ITEM YOU LEFT BEHIND?

?

I AM AFRAID THAT YOU MUST DIE HERE.

W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING, CAO CAO!?



.....

SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING.

I WENT TO GO KILL LU BOSHE.

WHAT DID YOU NEED TO DO?

W-WHY WOULD YOU KILL SUCH A KIND MAN!?

WHAT!?

HE WOULD BEAR MALICE TOWARDS US AND ALERT THE AUTHORITIES.

JUST THINK ABOUT HOW LU BOSHE WOULD FEEL ONCE HE RETURNS HOME TO FIND ALL OF HIS SERVANTS KILLED.

T-THAT MAY BE TRUE BUT...

IT WAS A NECCESSARY SACRIFICE.

ONCE THAT HAPPENS, THE AUTHORITIES WILL BE OUT ON FULL FORCE LOOKING FOR MY HEAD OUT HERE.

NO.

BUT TO KILL AN INNOCENT MAN IS NOT RIGHT.

IT IS BETTER FOR ME TO WRONG THE WORLD THAN THE WORLD TO WRONG ME.

WHAT I SAY AND DO DICTATES WHAT IS RIGHT.

W-WHAT A MAN...!!

LET US STAY THE NIGHT HERE, CHENG GONG.

BUT I DID SUCH A REGRETTABLE THING...

?

IF WE DO NOT REST NOW, WE WILL BE TOO TIRED TO CONTINUE TOMORROW.

I SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT ALONG SOME OF THAT WINE WHEN I KILLED LU BOSHE. IF I HAD SOMETHING TO DRINK, I COULD SLEEP SO PEACEFULLY.

I GUESS EVEN I PANICKED.

WHAT AUDACITY!

I WAS MISTAKEN.

BUT NOW I SEE HIS TRUE NATURE! HIS ASPIRATIONS ARE NOT TO SAVE THE WORLD BUT TO OBTAIN IT!

I BELIEVED THIS MAN WOULD BE A LOYAL SERVANT OF HAN WHO WOULD BRING PEACE TO THESE TROUBLED TIMES.

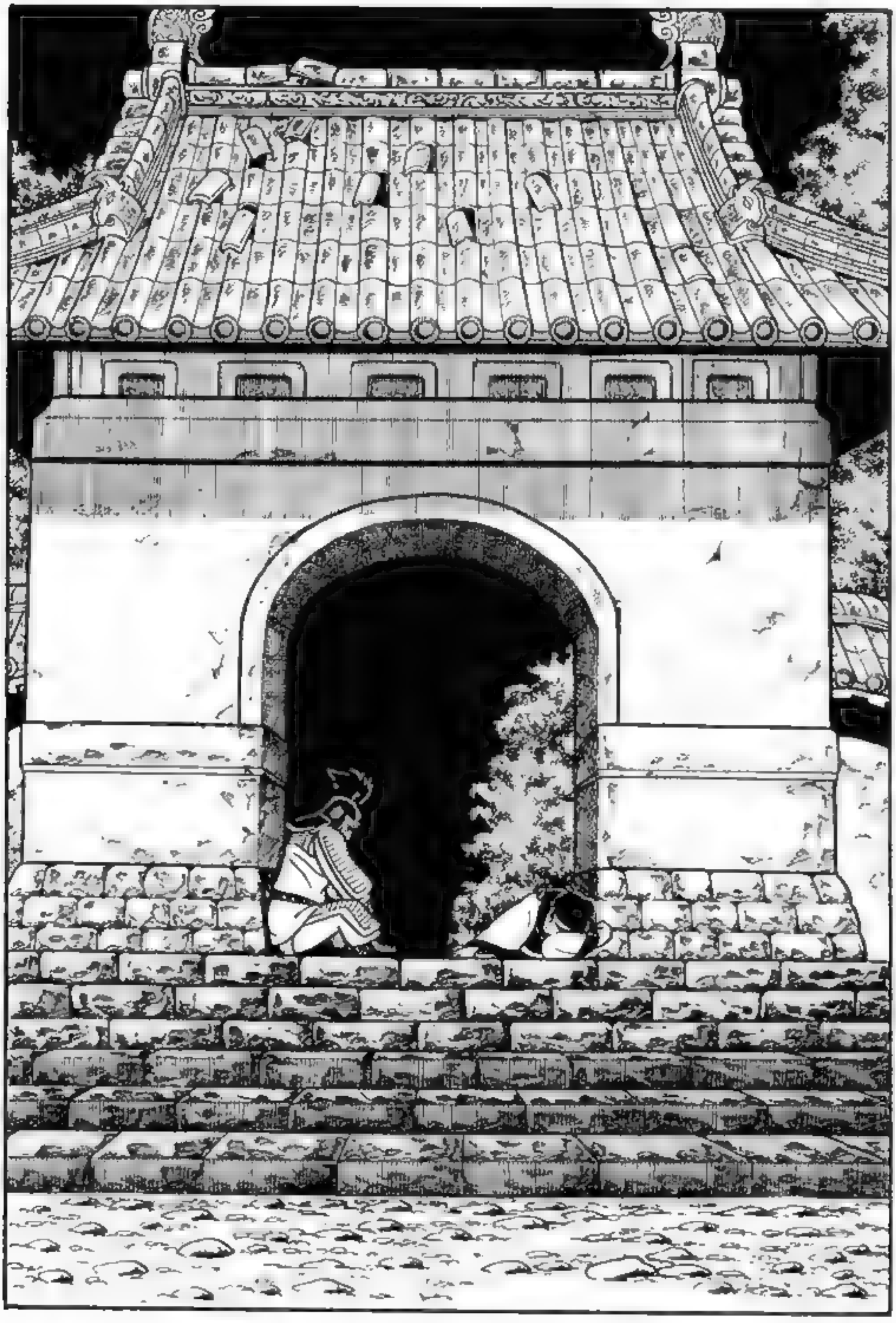
HE WILL SURELY BRING MORE TROUBLE TO THIS CHAOTIC WORLD IF LEFT ALIVE.

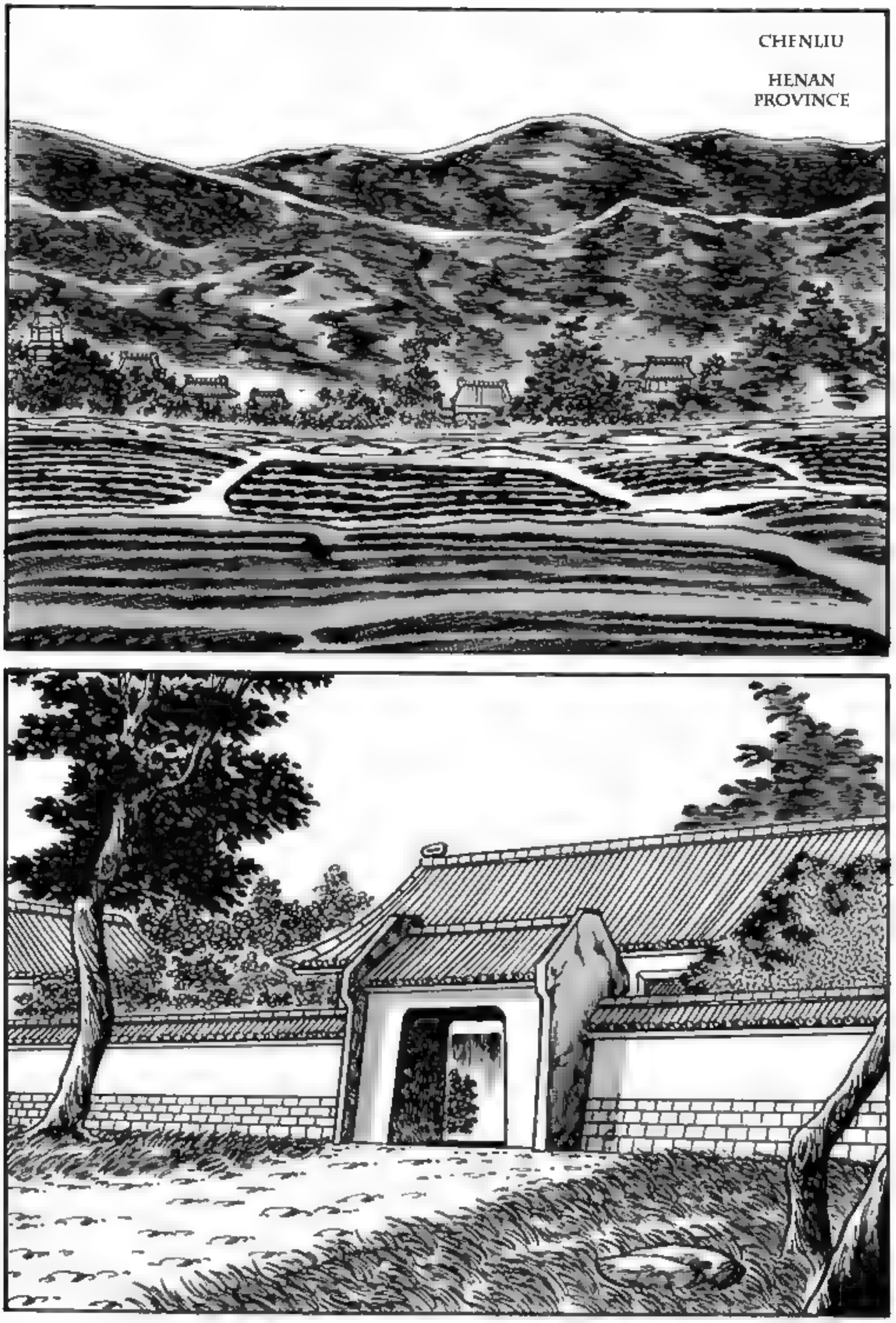
I CAN SIMPLY KILL HIM WHILE HE'S ASLEEP...

NO, STOP. IT IS DISGRACEFUL OF A WARRIOR TO KILL A SLEEPING MAN.

AND LOOKING AT HIS DETERMINATION AND DARING BOLDNESS, IT IS TRUE THAT HE IS NO ORDINARY MAN...

PERHAPS IT IS HEAVEN'S WILL THAT SUCH A MAN WAS BORN IN THIS AGE.




CHENLIU
HENAN
PROVINCE

MMM, YOU'VE DONE AN OUTRAGEOUS THING.

SO THEN, WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?

YES, FATHER.

AND SO THAT'S HOW YOU BECAME A WANTED MAN!?

YOU SPEAK OF SUCH BOLD THINGS SO CALMLY.

I PLAN TO CONSCRIPT SOLDIERS TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO.

AND WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?

THAT IS WHERE I WISH FOR FATHER TO HELP ME.

IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE A BAD JOKE OR DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT OUR FAMILY HAS ENOUGH MONEY TO RAISE AN ARMY?

NO, I DO NOT.

I NEED FUNDS TO CONSCRIPT SOLDIERS.

!!

...

OUR CAO FAMILY IS A DISTANT DESCENDANT OF XIAHOU AND THE FAMOUS GENERAL CAO SHEN. BY USING OUR ESTEEMED ANCESTRY, I SHALL PERSUADE PEOPLE OF AFFLUENCE TO DONATE THEIR MONEY TO MY CAUSE.

BUT YOU HAVE A LOT OF ACQUAINTANCES, DO YOU NOT FATHER? I WANT YOU TO INTRODUCE ME TO SOMEONE WHO DOES HAVE THE MONEY.

THEN I SHALL INTRODUCE YOU TO WEI HONG.

HMM, I SEE...

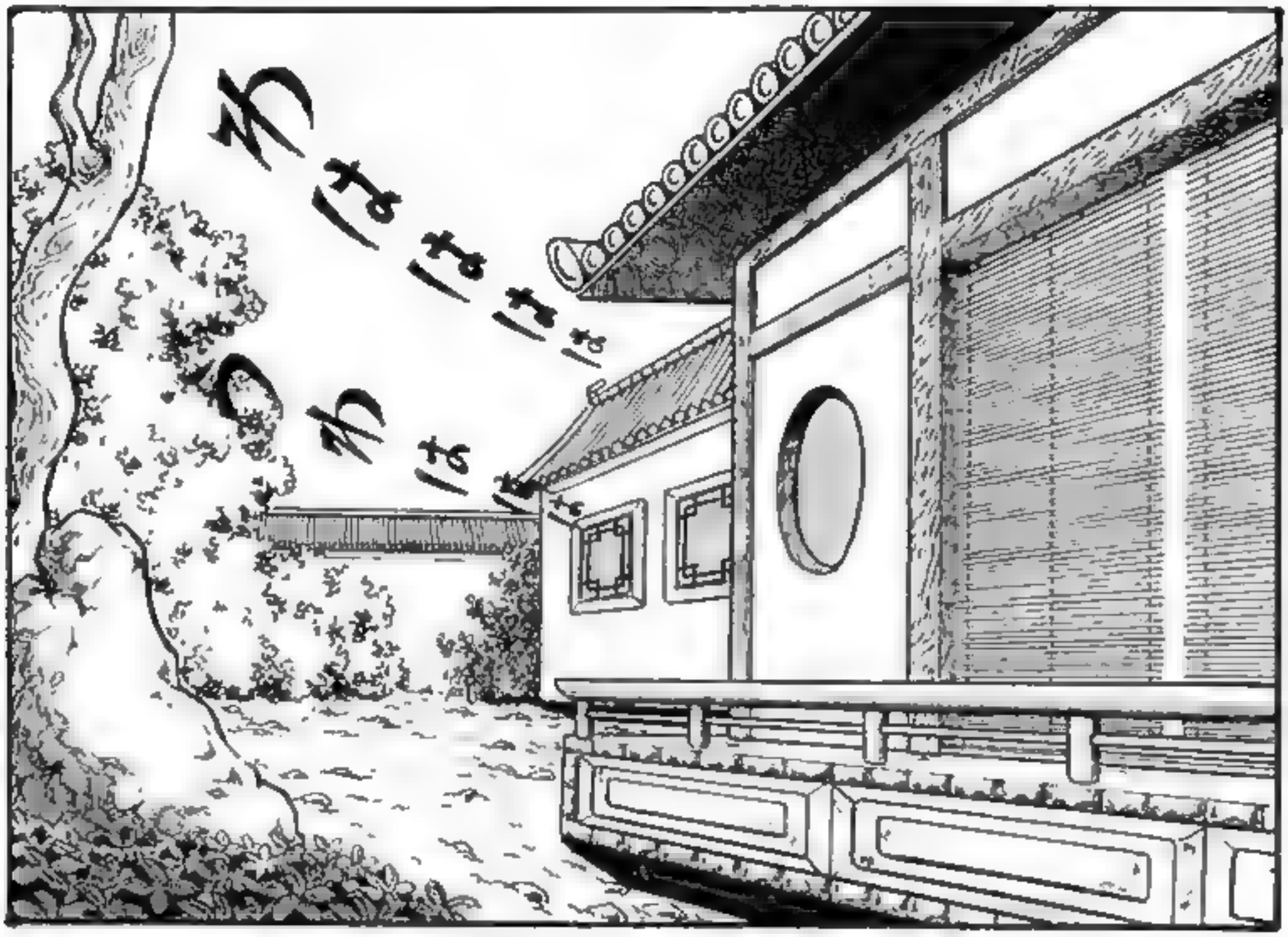
HE IS THE MOST AFFLUENT MAN IN ALL OF HENAN PROVINCE AND I HAPPEN TO BE ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH HIM.

WEI HONG?

I SHALL ASK HIM TO DONATE MONEY WHEN HE IS REASONABLY DRUNK,

THAT IS GREAT TO HEAR, FATHER. YOU SHOULD INVITE HIM HERE FOR DINNER RIGHT AWAY.

ALRIGHT THEN. I CAN DO AT LEAST THAT FOR YOU AS YOUR FATHER.



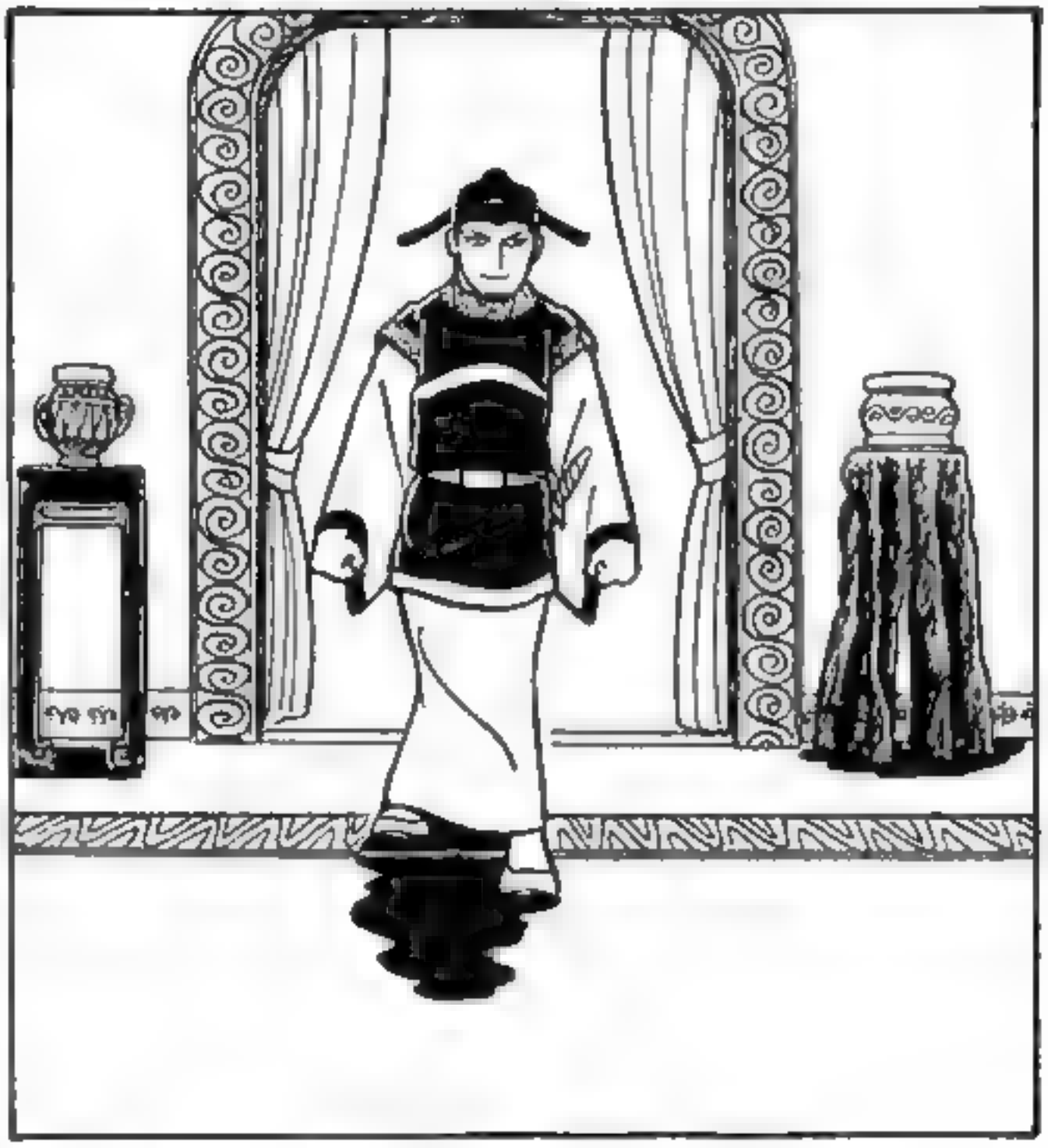
I THINK HE IS QUITE DRUNK NOW.

YES, YES, I THANK YOU FOR THE EXCELLENT WINE. I AM DRINKING LIKE A FISH AS IT IS ALREADY!
PLEASE, DRINK AS MUCH AS YOU WANT!

I WOULD BE FORCED TO KILL HIM, OF COURSE.

BUT WHAT WILL YOU DO IF HE REFUSES?

HMM, WHOM MAY THIS MAN BE?



THIS IS MY SON, CAO CAO.

IT IS A PLEASURE TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.
AH, SO YOU ARE CAO CAO. I HAVE HEARD A LOT OF THINGS ABOUT YOU.

A REQUEST...? AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?

PARDON MY BOLDNESS BUT I HAVE A REQUEST TO ASK OF YOU, SIR.

AT THIS RATE, ONLY DESTRUCTION AWAITS THIS COUNTRY.

HE EVEN REPLACES THE EMPEROR'S THRONE AT HIS OWN WHIMS.

I AM SURE YOU HAVE HEARD THE RUMORS OF DONG ZHUO AND HIS TYRANNICAL RULE OVER THE CAPITAL.

YES, I HAVE HEARD THAT EMPRESS HE AND THE FORMER EMPEROR WAS ASSASSINATED.

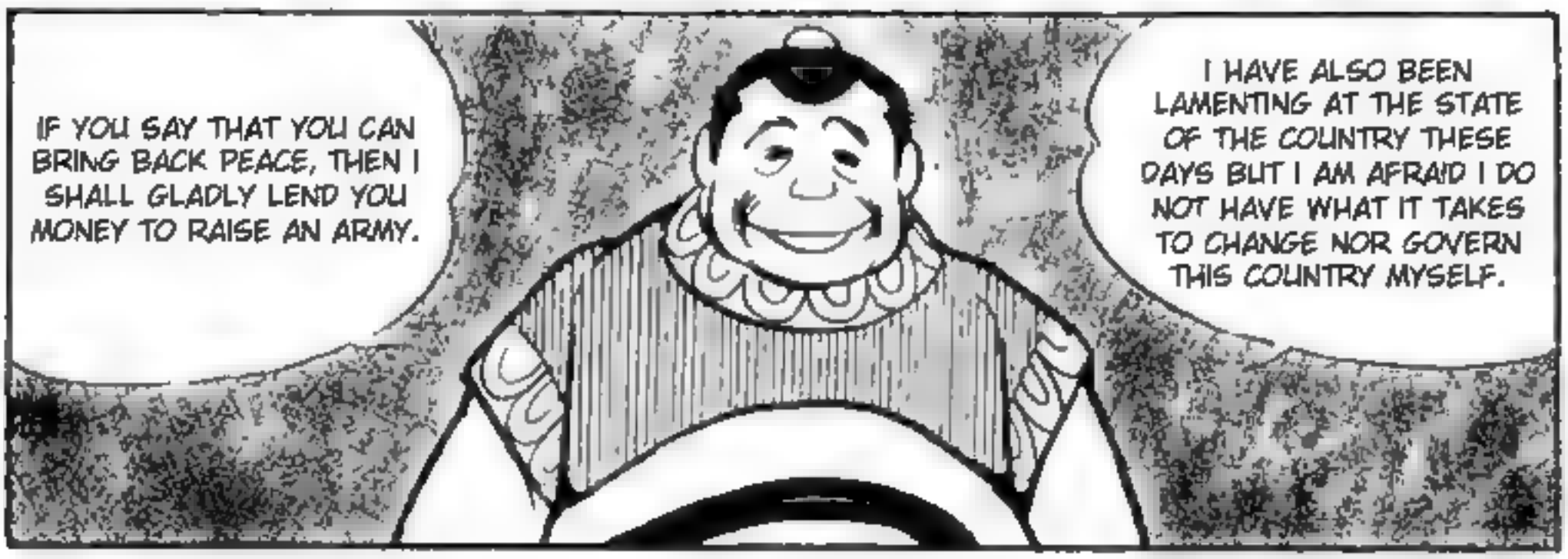
I CANNOT SILENTLY STAND BY ANY LONGER AND SO I WISH TO RAISE AN ARMY TO FIGHT AGAINST DONG ZHUO.

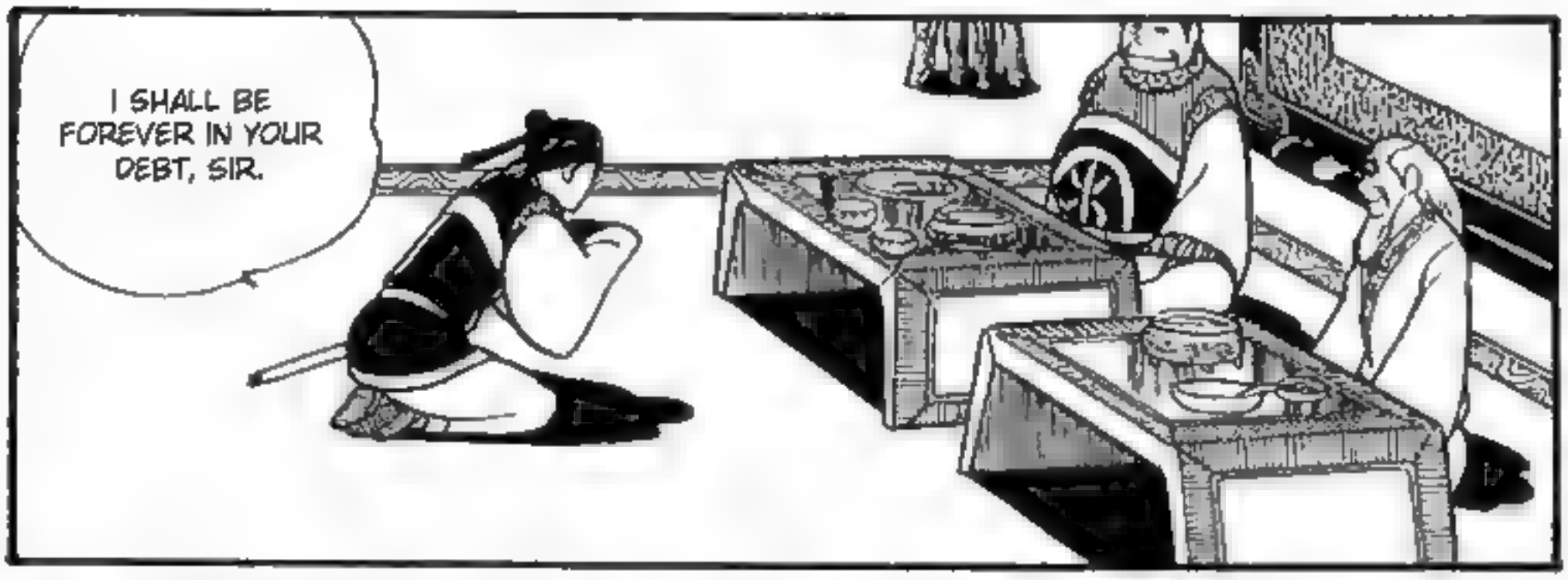
HOW DOES SIR FEEL ABOUT MY PRO-POSAL?

THIS IS WHERE I REQUIRE SIR'S ASSISTANCE. I NEED THE FUNDS TO RAISE AN ARMY.

R-REALLY SIR!?

IF THAT IS WHAT YOU NEED, I SHALL GLADLY HELP.


IF YOU SAY THAT YOU CAN BRING BACK PEACE, THEN I SHALL GLADLY LEND YOU MONEY TO RAISE AN ARMY.
I HAVE ALSO BEEN LAMENTING AT THE STATE OF THE COUNTRY THESE DAYS BUT I AM AFRAID I DO NOT HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO CHANGE NOR GOVERN THIS COUNTRY MYSELF.


I SHALL BE FOREVER IN YOUR DEBT, SIR.

IT SEEMS IT ALL WENT WELL, CAO CAO.

HE'S MUCH MORE REASONABLE THAN I IMAGINED.

AND THANKS TO THAT, HE MANAGED TO LIVE ANOTHER DAY.

SO THAT IT SHALL MEAN ALLEGIANCE?

ON ONE, I WANT IT TO READ LOYALTY, AND ON THE OTHER, JUSTICE.

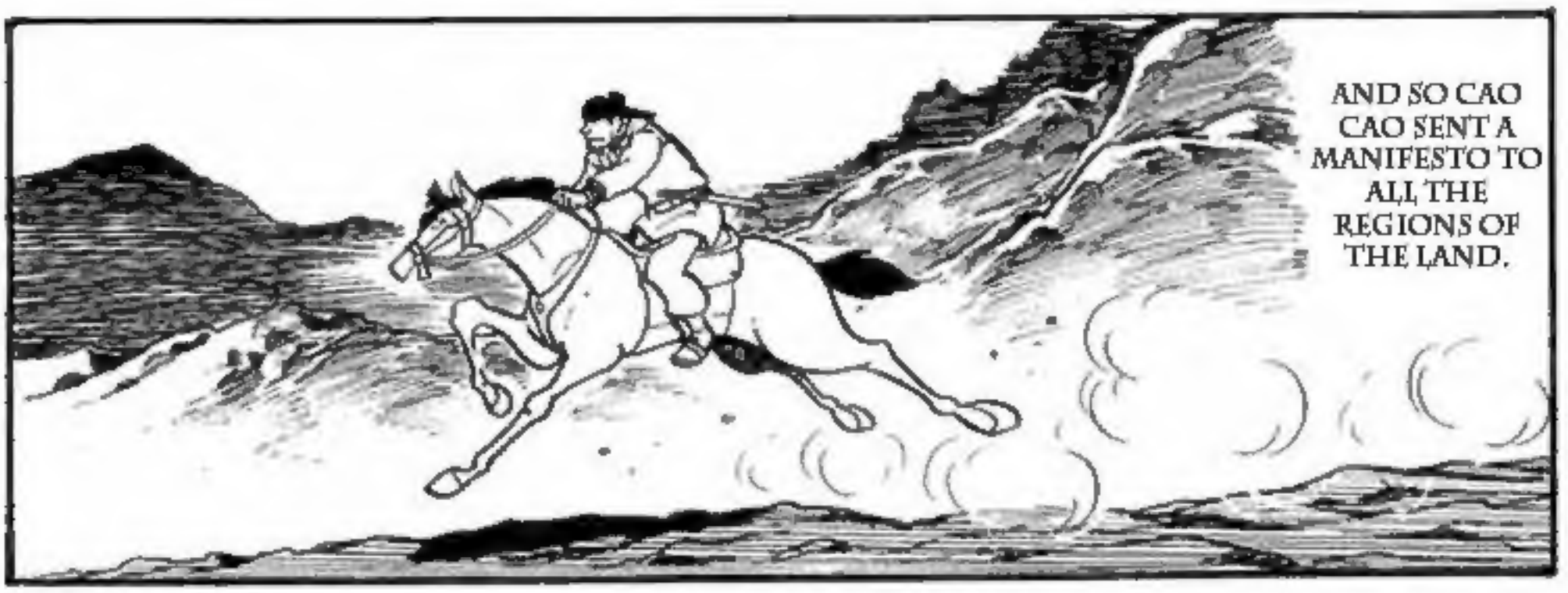
FLAGS?

CHENG GONG, I WANT YOU TO MAKE TWO TYPES OF FLAGS RIGHT AWAY.

AN IMPERIAL EDICT!?

AND THEN WE SHALL SPREAD A RUMOR THAT I HAVE RECEIVED AN EDICT ORDERING ME TO DO THIS FROM THE EMPEROR HIMSELF.

WELL OF COURSE. WE MUST BEND THE TRUTH A LITTLE IF WE WANT TO ATTRACT *GOOD* MEN.



AN URGENT MESSAGE TO THOSE WHO REMAIN LOYAL TO OUR GREAT HAN DYNASTY

DONG ZHUO HAS DECEIVED HEAVEN AND EARTH, KILLED THE EMPEROR, AND BROUGHT OUR COUNTRY TO RUIN. THE HAN PALACE NOW LIES WITHIN A MAELSTROM OF TYRANNY AND HEINOUS CRIMES. ACTING ACCORDING TO THE IMPERIAL EDICT I HAVE RECEIVED, I SHALL GATHER RIGHTEOUS MEN AND RID OF THE EVIL THAT PLAGUES THIS COUNTRY.

NOW IS THE TIME TO FREE THE PALACE FROM TYRANNY AND THE PEOPLE FROM SUFFERING. I ASK OF OTHERS TO GATHER AND RAISE THEIR OWN ARMIES AS SOON AS THEY RECEIVE THIS MESSAGE.

IT READ AS SUCH:

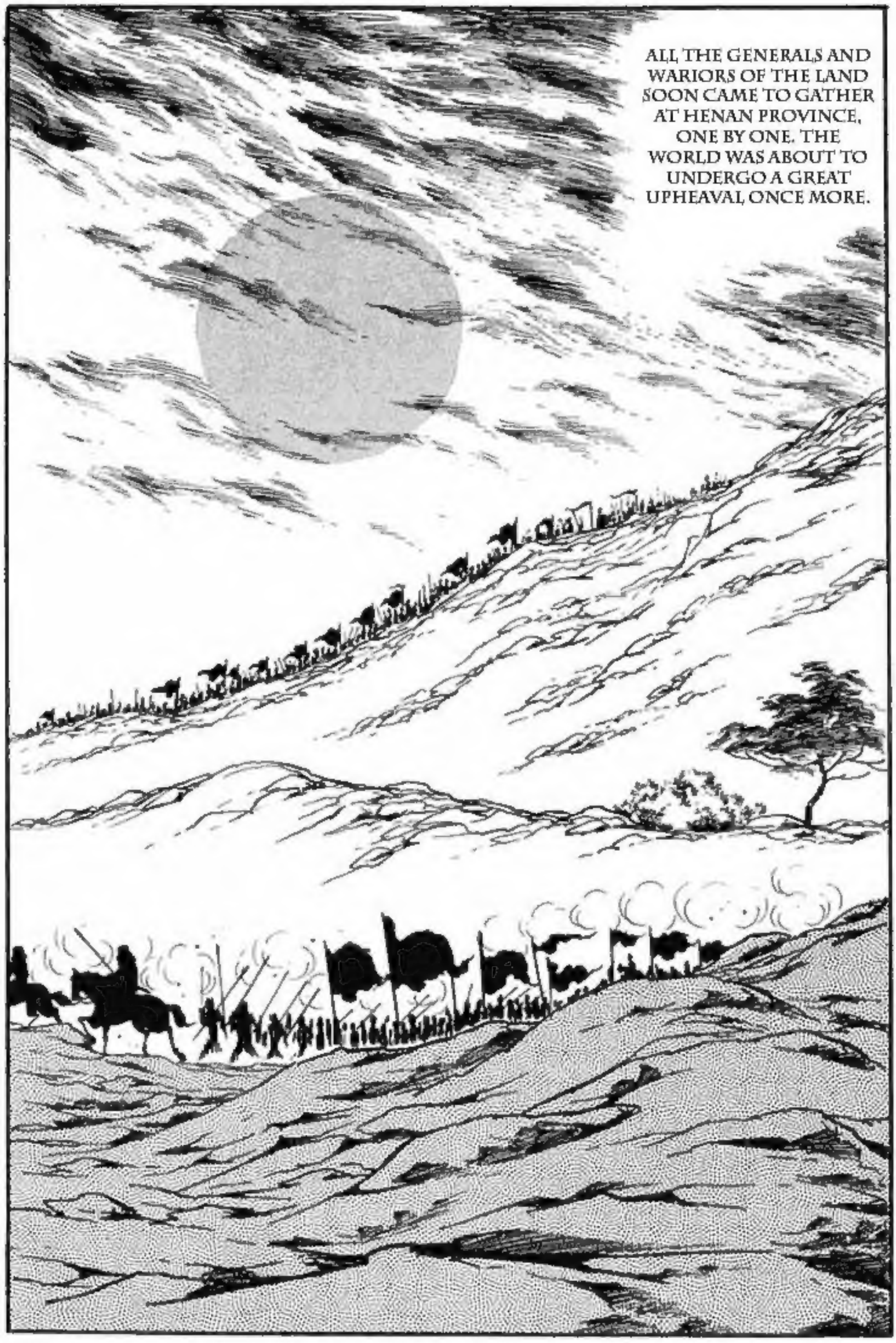
A MAN CAN NOT BECOME A HERO SOLELY DUE TO HIS TALENTS OR CHARACTER.

IT IS SAID THAT HE MUST BE BLESSED WITH THREE THINGS BEFORE ANY-THING.

CAO CAO'S MANIFESTO HAD CALLED UPON THESE THINGS.

THOSE THREE THINGS ARE: TIME, PLACE, AND THE PEOPLE'S WILL.

*THE TWO CHINESE CHARACTERS ON THE FLAGS READ "LOYALTY" AND "JUSTICE."


ALL THE GENERALS AND WARIORS OF THE LAND SOON CAME TO GATHER AT HENAN PROVINCE, ONE BY ONE. THE WORLD WAS ABOUT TO UNDERGO A GREAT UPHEAVAL ONCE MORE.

TRANSLATED BY HOX

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4

横山 光輝

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Original 潮出版社 希望コミックス

Digital Distributor
eBOOK Initiative Japan Co.,Ltd.
〒101-0062　東京都千代田区神田駿河台 2-9-18
http://www.ebookjapan.jp